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To Miss Evaline Smith  
on the occasion of her marriage -  
( From Mr & Mrs Ellis Cotton wishing her  
health happiness and prosperity.  
August .1907. )

~~A~~

Bromsgrove  
printing

£16

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*CHIMES AND RHYMES.*

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*Bromsgrove Church, South Side.*  
*(By Moonlight.)*







# CHIMES AND RHYMES.

ROMANTIC TALES  
OF  
BROMSGROVE BELLS  
AND  
BROMSGROVE NAILS.

*WITH OTHER VERSES ON LOCAL THEMES,*

BY

John Goston,

*Author of*

*'Song and Sentiment,' 'Thoughts and Fancies,'*


*&c., &c.*



BROMSGROVE :

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE "MESSENGER" Co., 93 HIGH STREET.

1903.



*To those Inhabitants  
of his native Town of BROMSGROVE  
who do not disdain so trifling a compliment  
the Author dedicates  
the principal pieces in this Book.*



*(Entered at Stationers' Hall.)*



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*Bromsgrove Steeple  
(from the north-west).*



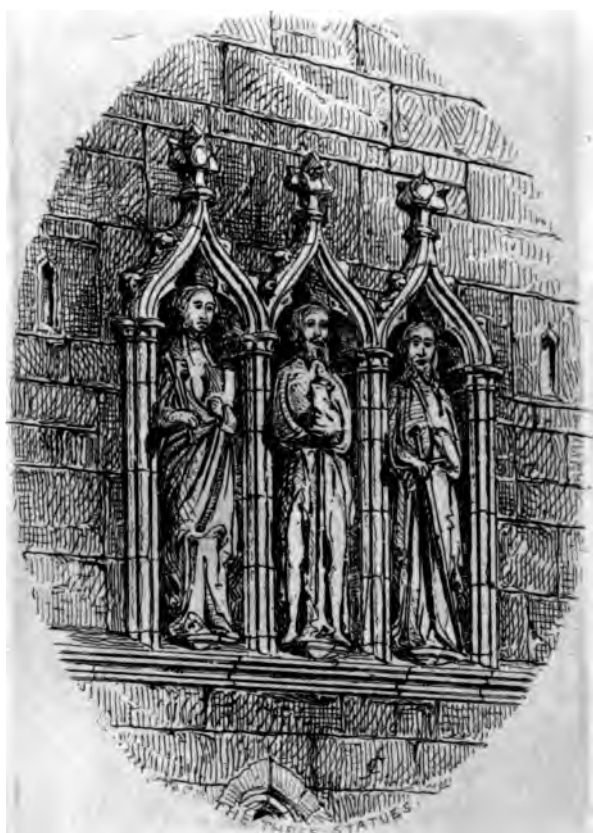






*Bromsgrove Steeple  
(from the north-west).*





**A Story from a Steeple,**

and

**A Carol from the Bells.**

(BEING A TALE OF CHRISTMAS EVE IN RHYME.)

---

**I**N a triple niche on the tower wall, over the western entrance to the ancient parish church of Bromsgrove in Worcestershire, are three statues, personifying St. John the Baptist to whom the church is dedicated, with Saints Peter and Paul on either side.

The Narration — somewhat in the mediæval vein — which follows the Prelude, is put into the mouth of the central figure, the statues being by poetic license endowed with consciousness and speech for the purposes of the story. (For various other notes see end of poem.)

**Prelude.**

**T**HERE is a town of 'one long street'  
Set in the midst of Worcestershire,  
And standing o'er it, fair and meet,  
A grey old church uplifts its spire ;  
Against whose belfry, plain to see,  
Three carved saints stand in company.

Folk say that when these statues hear  
The midnight hour above them sound  
They quit their niches, and appear  
In ghostly guise upon the ground.  
If this be true I do not know,  
For I have never seen them so.

But one night in the winter time  
And shortly following Christmas Day,  
Whilst hearkening to the curfew chime,  
And chancing round the church to stray,  
I heard the after-silence break,  
And one of the old figures speak.

It called to me by name and said :—  
“O thou who through these walks dost roam,  
Reflecting on the quick and dead  
Who all about thee have their home,  
We know well that thy thought oft wings  
Its flight to old romantic things.”

“And as by a mysterious spell  
We have of speech, just now, the power,  
If thou wilt listen I will tell  
Of our experience on this tower ;  
Strange happenings in the dark and light,  
And what occurred on Christmas night.”

---

PART I.

**The Saffron's Experiences.**

FIVE centuries have nearly sped  
Since first up here I stood ;  
God's-acre then held fewer dead,  
Its trees were a sapling brood ;  
But ever, as spring-time came and fled,  
Their greenth has been renewed,  
And the planter has long since found a bed  
Where their boughs drip, while his blood—  
With that of others—their roots has fed ;  
Such pith is in dead men's blood.

Changes beside those rung on the bells  
Have greeted me since uprose  
The mason's scaffold ; and memory dwells  
On each in its turn, but those  
Re-kindled scenes of the dim old days  
Please best my heavy heart,  
And I love to gaze through the dreamy haze  
As they recur and depart ;  
Though like a knell or friend's farewell  
Such visions leave a smart.

I brood upon those times of yore  
When Feckenham woods spread wide ;  
When bold Sir Humfrey slew the boar  
That ravaged the country side.  
Against the chancel a chapel stands,  
Endowed at his death with rent and lands ;  
A chantry his widow founded, wherein

A priest should daily pray  
That she and her husband, freed from sin,  
With all 'christen soules,' and her children,  
Might wend to heaven for aye.  
But the rents are lost, and no priest has said  
For centuries past a mass for the dead,  
And modern clerics now declare,  
With a belief most people share,  
That heaven heeds no purchased prayer.

I think, too, when these moods prevail,  
Of the monks who dwelt in Dodford dale ;  
And then of the changing faith that came  
With lustful Henry's reign of shame.  
Or else my retrospections run  
To the days of war and rebellion,  
When through the town in scattered flight  
The Royalists fled from Worcester fight ;  
And as my fleeting fancies range  
From past to present, all seems strange,  
And nothing sure but Death and Change.

For christening, still, the children come,  
For marriage come the maids,  
For burial the old, and some  
By death in lusty prime struck dumb :  
The grave's engulfing shades  
Hide one and all, whilst here on high  
I view the pageantry go by  
Of life and death,—a witness I  
That flesh is grass and all must die.

Beneath Time's touch I grow so old  
That every element makes bold  
    To rack me to the core ;  
Frost numbs my stony limbs with cold,  
    And—harsher than of yore—  
The battering hail and rain, combined  
With the bleak buffets of the wind,  
    Prevail against me sore :  
For all things of terrestrial kind  
    Must perish 'neath the ban  
Of that Destroyer from whose hand,  
Like water-drops or grains of sand,  
    The centuries roll ; and life's short span  
Is meted out ; whilst evermore  
One instant hides that gone before.

And yet this tower on which I dwell  
Hath braved the rack of ruin well.  
Four centuries and a half 'neath heaven,  
And set four-square to every shock,  
On this broad scarp of native rock  
It hath with storm and whirlwind striven,  
Yet not an inch hath budged or given ;  
Although its spire-top hath been broke  
And mended oft from lightning stroke.  
The old-world builders were not crossed  
By niggard grudgings as to cost ;  
They sought to make it fair and fit  
And worthy of the Lord of it ;  
Deserving, too, to stand before  
The church their sires had raised of yore.



And so, in all they could command  
Of money, stone, or laboring hand  
They gave, to build it strong and grand.  
Holding for this in right respect  
The genius of the architect ;

Not thwarting his best aims,  
But helping well to realise  
What artist-schemes he might devise  
To make it lovely in all eyes,

And meet for Worship's claims.  
So built in buttressed grandeur high,  
With steeple pointing to the sky  
In all its ancient majesty,  
It stands firm yet, a landmark fair  
To all the region round ;  
Stands as a witness, to declare  
That God hath here a house of prayer,  
That here is hallowed ground.

And I, from this my niche, still see  
The pleasant spring make green the lea,  
Bright summer pass, the swallows flee,  
And frosty winter strip the tree.  
I watch the sower walk the fields,  
I view the harvest autumn yields,  
I hear the flail the thresher wields.

Morn after morn, behind my back,  
The hands of rising day draw back  
Night's dusky curtain, and present—  
To waking earth's renewed content—  
The cheering sun, which, mounting high  
Above—in empyreal sky—

O'er heaven's expanse bath mastery ;  
And thence, with flaming flags unfurled,  
Displays his glory to the world.

Descending later to the west  
He seems, sometimes, to pause for rest,  
As if he were Earth's sovereign guest  
Or else her suitor—who would sup  
With her and drain a loving cup  
Ere he departs. Oftimes his face  
I see, and all the god-like grace  
Of his proud presence. See him hold  
His chalice bright of ruddy gold  
Towards her, with the wine of life  
Well filled, and with rich solace rife.  
Saluting her with radiant smiles,  
And with a thousand loving wiles,  
He fondly leans it to her lips,  
While she with glad and grateful sips  
Drinks up its draughts of warm delight  
Unmindful of fast nearing Night,  
Whose shades, regathering overhead,  
He doth not heed nor she then dread ;  
Assured that, when some hours are o'er,  
The constant orb will come once more  
To light and bless her as before.

Sometimes my fond thought deems it all  
Suggestively symbolical  
Of that ' last supper's ' loving cup  
Our Lord, at parting, offered up  
To cheer the brethren, and sustain  
Their spirits through life's stress and pain,

Till he should come again to reign.  
But though, since then, two thousand years  
Of gloom and trial, doubt and fears  
Have passed, yet,—from the heavenly home  
Which he left this world to prepare  
For faithful friends—he doth not come ;  
And none know why he waits, nor where.

*( The Effigy describes Satanic manifestations. )*

I often dream of that bright year  
When, born of the carver's skill,  
Our architect first placed me here  
The duties to fulfil  
Of a faithful ward ; to watch and guard  
This shrine from every ill  
That Satan's myrmidons might seek  
Upon its hallowed walls to wreak,  
What time with shocks of horrid noise  
Their threatening thunders thrill the skies.  
Whene'er the dangerous tempest-clouds  
Draw near the trembling spire,  
These fiends come too, in bellowing crowds,  
And vent their furious ire  
By pouring down from some dark height  
Vials of lightning, hot and white,  
To set the fane on fire.  
Or, riding with the storm-wrack past,  
Like Parthian archers of the air  
Upon us they their arrows cast,  
And lash us through the lurid glare  
With whips of hurtling hail and rain,  
Till, sped by the swift hurricane,  
They whirl away elsewhere.

But our patron saint, whose form I take,  
Against such raids is ever awake ;  
And he, as he loves this temple well,  
Hath taught us ways whereby to quell  
Each harmful plot and spiteful spell,  
Though the secret to mortals I may not tell.

Sometimes these sacrilegious knaves  
On stormy nights steal round the graves,  
Disturbing from their burial gloom  
The hapless tenants of the tomb ;  
Commanding all to their demon revels  
Who played in life the part of devils ;  
Though powerless ever to intrude  
Upon the peace of the just and good.  
I have seen these lost ones rise like ghosts  
When summoned thus by the impish hosts :  
Seen them gather and heard them there  
Fealty to hell's sovereign swear  
In words too blasphemous to declare.  
Fiends and phantoms by turns, each one,  
Joining, when all the rites were done,  
In this perverted prayer :

(*Fiends*)      Hail, Lord Luciferus !  
                 Angel of ill ministry  
                 Brooding o'er life's troubled sea,  
                 Hearken to our call on thee !  
Some are here to share with us  
                 The enduring infamy  
                 Of thy proud apostacy.  
Grant them to fare back with us

To Hades dark, or Acherus,  
Till at doom, by Heaven's decree,  
They their spirits yield to us  
Eternally !

(*Ghosts*) Hail, O Luciferus !  
Lord of all that damnèd be !  
Having lived unrighteously  
Heaven hath no bliss for us,  
E'en could we its glories see.  
With the wise and virtuous  
Shame's reproachful misery  
Would but vex our base degree :  
Wherefore, Lord Luciferus,  
We assign our souls to thee  
Eternally !

Their homage paid, I have seen these crowds  
Of ghostly people draped in shrouds,  
Their eyes aglare with flames whose glow  
Suffused the grave yard gloom below,  
Disport for hours by tomb and tree  
To a skeleton fiddler's minstrelsy.  
They have danced and pranced till their skulls would seem  
Like bubbles white on a whirling stream,  
As they bounded over the slabs and stones  
To the rattling clank of their own dry bones ;  
Pausing often their bouts between  
For rest and jest, and song obscene,  
Until some step they chanced to hear  
Approach ; or saw that dawn was near ;  
When all would hurriedly disappear.

Or else the storm-fiend, calling his knaves  
From devilry back, would flog to their graves  
With scourges of lightning the terrified slaves.

*(The Effigy reports the strictures of the Demons  
on the Church and Society.)*

At other times I have known the night  
Profaned by demons that delight  
In mockery:—spirits of utterance rude  
Whose nature it is to abuse the good,  
And who with a pestilent spite intrude  
On my companions here, and me ;  
Vexing our silent solitude,  
Flitting about from tower to tree,  
Jeering from gargoyles and canopy,  
And charging the Church, in their impious spleen,  
With most of the evils that ever have been.

They seem by some vile sense aware  
That we can hear the tales they bear ;  
To know our spells to baffle harm  
Against mere scoffing hold no charm ;  
That though of stone, and uttering nought  
Ourselves against the jibes they fling,  
Their visits vex us ; and are fraught  
With many a sad conjecturing.

And so they come and prate of strife,  
Of inquisitions—with torture rife,  
Of feuds and fearful crimes of yore  
Lying, they say, at the Church's door.  
Of Reason—man's free gift from God—

Repressed in him by the priestly rod  
To make him 'Faith's' unquestioning clod.  
Of pains of rack, and stake, and knife,  
With 'witch' and 'heretic' reft of life.  
Deeds of a persecuting age,  
Wars the crusaders went to wage,  
Horrors of many a dungeon cage,  
Slaughters of the good and sage ;  
And all the tale of sectarian rage  
Written in blood on history's page.  
Not forgetting to paint and trace  
The many wrongs of the Hebrew race,  
And slavery's prolonged disgrace.  
Or should some crime be done below,  
The fruit of evil seeds they sow—  
Some cruel murder or assault,  
Theft, slander, or whatever fault  
May shame the district far or near—  
They come and vaunt it to our ear ;  
In mockery asking, by our side,  
" Was it for this Christ taught and died ?  
Was it for this he was crucified ?  
Has the Church inspired by its hectoring plan  
More loving regard for God or man ? "

" Can Peter—the veracious—swear,  
Or Paul their patron now declare  
These Gentiles worthier than they were ?  
Is ethic thought attuned much higher  
Than that of the old ' heathen ' choir—  
Among whom Buddha's name occurs,  
And Plato's—who to virtue stirs,

The Stoics, and philosophers ?  
After two thousand years of preaching,  
Threatening, martyring, and beseeching,  
Are men, to-day, for Christian teaching  
Nobler, less corrupt, and more  
Kindly and generous than before ?  
At great ideals do they not laugh,  
And sell their lives to the 'Golden Calf' ;  
Starving the soul to glut the purse  
Till ' money-making ' becomes their curse."

"Stand not the nations near and far  
Armed to the teeth in the cause of War ;  
Waiting encamped till the trumpet's note  
Prompts them to fly at each other's throat ?  
And is not the subtlest modern skill  
Lavished on methods to maim and kill ;  
Gold being showered—not on men who save—  
But on those who, speeding destruction's wave,  
Can soonest send a host to the grave ? "

"Folk pray for ' peace in our time, O Lord,'  
And seek for union and accord—  
With safety, as the litany saith,  
' From battle, murder, and sudden death '—  
By filling the war-chest that equips  
More soldiers, sailors, and battle-ships.  
What matters to pious souls like these  
Religious consistence, or the pleas  
Of humbler nations swept below,  
So long as Britain can ' boss the show ' ?  
With its ' ships and men and money too '



Mad ' Might ' has little with ' Right ' to do ;  
So blow the trumpet and bang the drum  
And send who questions to ' kingdom come.'  
Men boast of ' Freedom,' yet prevent  
Free speech, even here, when in dissent ;  
The tongue may only be allowed  
To voice the notions of the crowd ;  
Should speakers dare to plead a cause  
Denied the popular applause,  
They soon will learn what a mythic thing  
Is the ' freedom ' of which cheap patriots sing."

Among the fiends who thus annoy  
Are Rater, Prater, and Bantering-boy ;  
Detractor, and his carping crew  
Of Cynics, and Perverters, too.  
All these, and others, come by turns  
And worry us with world concerns.  
One gloomy sprite named Pessimist,  
A sort of impish Schopenhauer  
Who gives things an ill-favoured twist,  
Propounds strange questions by the hour :—

" What brotherhood is in the pride  
And class distinctions that men divide ?  
What sense of justice, honor, and right,  
Leavens the license of wealth and might ?  
Mid labor's stress and hungry strife  
Do the poor enjoy, now, happier life ?  
Do sweated toilers a fair share take  
Of the riches they for their ' masters ' make ?  
If so, how is it the sad fate comes  
For thousands to die in the stews and slums

Of the cities ; to starve by the teeming halls  
Of Dives ; to languish in workhouse walls ;  
Or to rot and die where diseases gnaw  
The victims of poison and phossy jaw ?  
Are such as these to be content  
With the ' lot ' which ' Providence ' has sent ?  
Are such conditions likely to raise  
An ' Imperial Race ' in our braggart days ? ”

“ Have morals much advancement made  
In view of the harlot's bold parade  
Through the city streets of her wanton trade ?  
To name not still worse lecheries done  
' Neath ours, as once 'neath the Roman sun ?  
Or does “ Society ” now profess—  
    With its inanity,  
    Scandals and vanity,  
Corruption and licentiousness—  
To be of virtue the pattern grade ?  
Are not the street boys often hoarse  
Shouting the news of some divorce,  
Whose foul details reveal to men  
The ' moral ' modes of the ' upper ten ' ? ”

“ What of the home-wrecks and ruin due  
To the knavish greed of the usurer crew ?  
Consider the miseries that arise  
Through the frauds of bogus companies !  
And think of the jails with their criminal swarm  
By drink and gambling brought to harm !  
Are infant lives not daily sold  
To Death in your towns for insurance gold ?  
And dogs and dumb things reft of life

By the vivisector's torturing knife ?  
Do not diseases waste the nation  
Through food and drink adulteration ?  
Whilst thousands craftily cheat and steal,  
Betray their trust with trick and lie,  
Exploit the poor with ' commercial ' zeal,  
And as little regard for charity  
As they have care for the common weal ?  
Living lives possibly fuller of shame  
Than 'ere Rome's christianization came,  
Though cloaked more fine their conduct be  
With pious respectability."

" In business, now, one may discern,  
With ~~the~~ ' trusts ' and ' corners,' the ' big concern '   
Cause ruin to all outside the ' ring,'  
And humbler traders to beggary bring.  
Good manners are so beneath a ban  
That cities swarm with ' the hooligan.'  
Scant reverence for mere Worth is shown,  
The wise and their warnings are left alone,  
For the scholar's toil but little is cared  
When with more frivolous feats compared :  
It is to the jockey who wins some race  
That people assign a favored place,  
While still more glory attends the rout  
Of gamesters who kick a ball about."

" Are not big human butchers called  
Heroes ; and high with the lords installed ?  
Of whom no few their names possess  
Through former royal licentiousness ?

Whilst more, as history avers,  
Are sprung from public plunderers.  
How is it so few—who by tongue and pen  
Or the arts of peace serve the human cause—  
Are raised to the house of your 'noble' men,  
Or even receive for their efforts applause?  
How is it few poor men love the laws?  
But because their might, as experience teaches,  
Is less at the service of right than of riches.  
For riches can open the legal port  
And move a case on from court to court,  
Until, with an altered verdict given,  
The poorer man from his suit is driven;  
Beggared perchance by the legal show,  
Or through having to pay for mis-judgments below.  
Is he, too, not counted the better man  
And honored the highest way  
Who is most the political partizan,  
Or can best for his 'Party' pay?  
Distinctions have been too often bought;  
Whilst moneyless talent has counted nought;  
For rank, instead of rewarding merit,  
The worst may attain and fools inherit.

And has not the Church—which so long hath stood  
Propped by the State in a supreme station  
To minister morals to the nation  
As Sponsor, Instructor, and Guide life through,  
Backed by the aristocratic few—  
Blest all these ways and called them good?  
Or at least with outcries of indignation  
Railed against 'radical' reformation?

Do modern modes show its guiding hand,  
Or has our Satan held chief command ? ”

*(The Effigy continues)*

Thus do these scornful fiends delight  
To vex us in the dismal night ;  
Whilst we—misdoubting what they say—  
Ignore them, and speak yea nor nay,  
Till out of patience they flit away.  
Of all the tales their tongues pursue  
We know not which, or if any, be true ;  
For fixed as we are here, high and fast,  
Of what goes on in the world so vast  
We learn but little, and as to the past  
Grow more oblivious every day.  
In their intrusive raids of late,  
The theme on which they most dilate  
Is the likely parting of Church and State.

They say the law has unfair defects  
Which lets the Church o'er-lord the sects ;  
That its wealth is the people's right, and so  
For the good of all alike should go ;  
Nor be used longer to endow  
Teachings which millions disavow.  
That a ' National Church ', to deserve the name,  
Should stand upon no narrow plan,  
But the love of all good citizens claim,  
And shut out none by creed or ban.  
These scoffers say if the State were wise  
It would widen the Church, and make allies  
Of the children bigotry drove from its heart,

And give them a legally recognised part  
In the national service ; using their might  
On equal terms in the cause of right,  
And freeing for ever the Church's chart.  
If this, they hint, is not soon done  
The Establishment looks on a setting sun ;  
For irreconcilables in and out  
Will presently bring its ruin about ;  
Or feuds entirely its own will split  
Its power ; and of factional parts of it  
One to the Roman camp will go,  
The other extreme to some free sect flow,  
And the rest, they say,—if they discern  
The signs of the times aright—must learn  
To see itself in the clerical crowd  
Both disestablished and disendowed.

They sometimes tell a painful tale  
About church livings offered for sale ;  
Or say that clerics have altered the bible ;  
But when they thus our ears surprise  
What can we but reckon their story lies,  
Or at the least a monstrous libel ?  
They vaunt that now, with those who read,  
Cute journalists quite supersede  
Religious teachers ; and that which stirs  
Mankind is—not what to heaven refers—  
But the 'tip' of the sporting newspapers ;  
While the smart 'new woman' mostly dotes  
On 'Society' scandal and fashion notes.  
The other night, when the winds were surgy  
And all was wrapt in starless gloom,

They came and again rated Church and Clergy,  
Thus bantering us, if I may resume.

*(The further reproach of the Demons.)*

“What of the simony that controls  
These auction sales of the cure of souls ?  
And why don't the clergy more fairly divide  
Church funds, before begging from every side ?  
Are matters just, when the curate writhes  
Neath poverty he can scarce endure,  
Whilst those above him take the tithes—  
Which at first were largely meant for the poor ;  
Such tithes belonging, if tithe claims hold,  
More fitly to those of the Roman fold  
Who built the church, and endowed it of old.”

“But what most clerics want to know  
Is why so few to the services go.  
They should ask for answer the scientists  
And critical clan, who, giving such twists  
To the biblical story, have put to rout  
The old convictions and set up doubt.  
A doubt that smiles at the scriptural tale,  
And finds its wonders of no avail  
To carry assurance to the mind  
Where once a credulous faith was shrined.  
The ethical aim may be good and apt,  
But the doctrines in which Religion is wrapt  
Will bring its influence to decay  
If the dead old coil be not cast away,  
Truth's utterance freed, and Faith's teaching brought  
Into line with Knowledge and newer thought.”

“ While some, too, of your soul police—  
Wrangling clerks of the Prince of Peace—  
Seem most concerned for the Protestant view,  
Other professional prayer-men sue  
For Catholic claims, and lay more stress  
On ritual, now, than on righteousness :  
As those did who procured Christ’s death  
Because he slighted their shibboleth.  
With a prelate church they prove their accord  
By flouting each ecclesiastical lord,  
Unless his episcopal lordship shows  
Approval of what they themselves propose.  
They care no longer for ‘ overseers ’ ;  
By bishop ‘ opinions ’ no one steers ;  
Each bold divine his own view backs,  
Or goes for his cue to—Halifax.  
Such pastors, led by our chief enticer,  
Vaunt themselves ‘ priests,’ which they think sounds nicer,  
As savouring more of a sacrificer :  
And so with images, altars, and bobbery,  
Mary-worship, and Mass for the dead,  
Fancy wafers in lieu of bread,  
Confessions, absolvings, acolytes, pixes,  
Candles, processions, and crucifixes,  
Mimic the old sacerdotal jobbery ;  
Lure the dazed flock to Rome’s fold again ;  
Drawing them nearer it every day,  
Doing the Pope’s work on Protestant pay,  
Until, it may-be, by an honester course,  
They go and recruit the old Catholic force.  
Ha, ha !—Ho, ho !  
How can we devils from laughter refrain ?



Sniffing the incense, viewing the show  
Revived as it used to be years ago !  
Although up till now your parsons here  
Have sought by no back ways to steer  
For Peter's ship, the old Roman sphere ;  
Or in your church to hold, I wis,  
Mediæval and pagan performances."

"And then the wrangling Mission throng !  
Those men with gospels in their hand  
Which few in the same way understand,  
Who pester the people of heathen-land ;  
And helped by pleaders of plainer meaning—  
As opium, guns, gin, pistols and knives,  
On which the angel of Commerce thrives—  
Transform good simpletons half the while  
Into shoddy Christians and drunkards vile :  
Have they not countenanced the strong  
Who, by aggressiveness and wrong,  
Have made fresh fields for pious gleaning ?  
Smoothing the way for ' civilized ' settlers  
To rob the colored man of his home,  
Enslave, or send him forth to roam  
An outcast from his place of birth ;  
Or poison him off the face of earth.  
Are savages likely to be enticed,  
In this way, to love your master Christ ?  
Why do not missionaries first of all win  
Your ' Christian ' nations from war and sin ?  
' Rouse up and see to it, John ! ' they call ;  
Or jeeringly out of the darkness bawl—  
' Write them another epistle, Paul ! ' "

*(The Effigy resuming relates pleasanter experiences.)*

When I was young, long years ago,  
Did such foul fiends invade,  
The great bells uttered, loud and slow,  
Anathemas against the foe,  
And lent the faithful aid.  
The consecrated sound when heard  
Saved from intrusion, and deterred  
All mention of an evil word :  
For, as the solemn accents spread  
Of warning and injunction dread,  
Hell's baffled legions cowering fled  
To their own native shade.

But all the utterances we hear  
Are not in terms so harsh and drear ;  
Many there are that bring good cheer.  
We see signs, too, of peace and bliss  
Which prove things are not all amiss ;  
That though the Church of bygone times  
Was sullied with official crimes,  
Its purer purpose oftenest stood  
To comfort men and bring them good.  
God's Church was ever, and is still,  
Where men unite to do His will ;  
His will which aims at their advance  
To heights of happier circumstance.  
It knows no poor exclusive plan,  
No badge of the narrow partizan,  
Its Stanleys always will express  
Its liberal broad-mindedness.  
Accepted under various names,

And spread abroad through many lands,  
Its sons are known best by their aims,  
And what for life's best profit stands.

But though advance is slow, man moves  
For ever on in upward grooves.  
On every side the good has won ;  
Christ's ministry has wonders done ;  
His gospel-word has lifted men  
Beyond all else of tongue and pen ;  
And his example proved a spur  
To bring out man's best character.  
More just are customs now, and kind,  
Manners more gentle and refined,  
The great have drunk at Duty's fount,  
All life is held of more account,  
Less crime is now than used to be,  
Less coarseness and brutality.  
Woman is held in more respect,  
The laws all men alike protect,  
Corruption sways not the judge's scales,  
A higher sense of right prevails,  
Good service has due estimation,  
Work is not thought a degradation,  
Men stand up now as men—not slaves—  
And each his right demands—not craves :  
Demands the right to every chance  
Of elevation and advance,  
Despite ignoble circumstance.  
Old barriers are broken down,  
The low may rise to honor's crown.  
Gone is the old exclusiveness,

True worth is what men most assess.  
Lives are prolonged and hardships fewer,  
And what man owns is more secure :  
Though some with undue wealth there be  
All share a wider prosperity.

The rich have learned that their estate  
Must succour those less fortunate.  
Infirm and sick—affliction's thralls—  
Are nursed in countless hospitals ;  
Whilst poor infirmity abides  
In homes that Charity provides.  
Throughout the world, by good men spread,  
Christ's bond of brotherhood has led  
To mutual help, and friendlier thought,  
As men have more his spirit caught :  
For he condemned self-seeking, and  
Made care for others a command :  
Bade old oppression lapse and die  
Before a wide humanity.  
His teaching is extending far  
Abhorrence of the crime of War ;  
And in the wake of fierce offence  
Now follows mild benevolence,  
Intent to heal men's wounds and cure  
The ills War's sufferers endure.  
Good rulers would all strife abate  
And win the world to arbitrate :  
Not in ferocious ways and rude  
Let differing realms be blood-embrued.  
On all sides kinder motive reigns,

And through all peoples hatred wanes.  
Far off, too, on the heathen coast,  
And o'er the wilds of barbarous lands,  
The outposts of the Christian host  
Advance their ministering bands :  
Resigning comforts of home and peace,  
And often life itself, to release  
Some tribe of savagedom from the lure  
Of fetish follies and faiths impure.  
Extending through the world's dark places  
Diviner light to the ruder races,  
And teaching them better ways and graces.  
The intercourse of time to be  
    Shall bring man pleasure, not annoy ;  
*Ideas* shall hold rivalry  
    For yielding him life's fullest joy.  
    Old prejudices shall decay,  
    Old dominations pass away ;  
    Old bigotries defiled with gore,  
    Delusions that have plagued men sore,  
    And bad old customs, vex no more.

But pardon me, prithee, if I digress ;  
The failing of age is garrulousness ;  
And though in body here confined  
My thought is free as the wandering wind.  
So touching the Story I meant to relate,  
And speeding my speech at a swifter rate,  
Thy listening ears shall learn aright  
What came to pass on Christmas night  
Whilst we three watched from our steeple height.

PART II.

**The Effigy tells a Tale  
of Christmas Eve.**

I said it was nigh to the midnight hour  
When spirits of evil own most power,  
But just at the moment I had forgot  
That then, of all nights in the year, no plot  
By grammarye gendered, or wizardly charm,  
Might plague mankind or the righteous harm.  
As here, in the light of the moon's soft glow,  
I stood with my camel-skin flecked with snow,  
The churchyard lay plain as a map, below ;  
Save where the trees that marked its bound  
With wavering shadows fringed it round.  
The graves—where together the dead repose,  
The good with the wicked and friends with foes—  
By a frosty rime were silvered white,  
And, had not a buttress barred my sight,  
I might have beheld Tom's monument, plain,  
Where it lies on the wall beside Mad Bessie's lane.  
Mad Bessie ! the maiden whom love unkind,  
By luring from virtue, wrecked in mind ;  
And whose poor babe, the fruit of her fault,  
Was hidden and died in yon broken vault ;  
The precincts whereof, in her pitiful plight,  
She afterwards haunted at dead of night.

No mortal now broke with a trespassing tread  
The quiet that hallowed the homes of the dead,  
And yet I imagined at times I could trace  
A phantom-like being of fiendish race,  
A horrible creature—half man, half hound,  
That stealthily prowled o'er the burial ground  
Like a ghoul on some mischievous mission bound.

He seemed at first, through the further gloom,  
To be noting the names on every tomb ;  
But I saw him later more clearly stand  
With a scroll unrolled in his spectral hand  
On which he wrote with a burning brand.  
And I thought to myself that doubtless he  
Was an imp, sent up by the Devil to see  
How men and his agent Death agree  
On the score of human mortality.  
Or else, methought, he seeks to know  
How many of those entombed below  
His master may claim to carry away  
When cometh the direful judgment day.

Awhile he stayed and a circuit made  
Of the graveyard glade, and then  
Sped swift through the nether shade, afar,  
With a flaming course like a falling star,  
And vanished beyond my ken.  
Then the wind set up a ghostly groan,  
Whilst over the silent dead  
The skeleton lime-trees, making moan,  
Their quivering arms outspread.







*"The yew tree nigh the southern porch."*





All else was still, save that up higher,  
Above the battlements of the spire,  
I heard, when the chimes their slumbers broke,  
A tribe of jackdaws weirdly croak ;  
And from his perch in the yew tree nigh

The southern porch, where he sat like a seer,  
A lonely screech-owl make reply

In tones so unearthly I shook with fear.  
For he shrieked as he did on that dreadful night  
When the sexton fell from the belfry height,  
And was dashed to death against the floor  
Beneath this niche, by the western door.  
Since then, to my fancy, the eight o'clock bell  
Has sounded as sad as a funeral knell.  
That curfew-hour I can never forget ;  
The tragedy haunteth my memory yet ;  
For my lips were sealed to the danger rife  
And could shout no warning to save his life ;  
Could utter no timely word to save,  
Ere down through the bell-hole he sank to his grave.  
But it was not of this I meant to tell,  
My Story pertaineth to what befel  
Last Christmas night, whereof I spake,  
When I stood on guard in a perishing quake.

*(The Coming of the Ringers.)*

It was twelve by the clock, and far and near  
I had scanned the country round,  
When it chanced on a sudden my idle ear  
Was roused by the startling sound  
Of footsteps, that churchward seemed to veer ;  
And presently up the pathway strayed

Some muffled figures, whose purpose here  
Perplexed me so that in alarm  
I prayed for our saintly patron's aid  
And help against sacrilegious harm.

And Paul in this neighbouring niche, at the sight  
Of people approaching, exclaimed, " By the Lord  
It bodeth no good this strange visit by night ! "

And he privily laid tighter hold on his sword ;  
Which made me instinctively drop my head,  
Having capital reason such knives to dread.  
I feared at the moment he meant to leap down,  
And, braving them, emulate Peter's renown ;  
Who was not only famous, as everyone knows,  
For fisher-craft, but, as the Testament shows,  
Apt at lopping the ears of inquisitive foes.  
Yet, though in a fidget to learn what was meant,  
Paul wisely refrained from the dangerous descent,  
And listened indignant to tales Peter told  
About ' Resurrectionists '—miscreants bold  
Who rob new-made graves and sell corpses for gold.  
" Peradventure," said Peter with anger and dread,  
" *These* be skull-hunting knaves come to dig up the dead ;  
Like those villians who seventy years ago  
For dissection disposed of three bodies below.  
Though troubled myself with suspicion and fright,  
I calmed my companions as well as I might,  
And waited with ill-assumed patience to see  
What the aim of these strange interlopers could be.

Our fear soon fled ; for, as the crowd  
Drew near yon western gate,

The moon from out of her cloudy shroud  
Emerged in such bright state  
That every face shone clear to view,  
And all of us great comfort drew,  
For Peter when he saw them knew  
The men as friends of yore.  
"The ringers come from the town," quoth he,  
"To lighten the bells of their melody,  
Though it seemeth an undue hour !  
Yet let me think, for my ancient pate  
Is in such a drowsily torpid state  
That I have missed Time's course of late,  
For several months or more."

And, sifting things through the mental sieve,  
Paul said at length, "I would fain believe  
That this is our Master's advent eve."  
Quoth I, with joy, thou deemest right,  
It is the blessed Christmas night ;  
I marvel that our memories lent  
Of the vigil no presentiment.  
Although, since Henry ruled, I trow  
It has been difficult to know  
How wags the world, how rolls away  
The time, for now a holy day  
Is seldom kept, and saint's days pass  
Unheeded, nor is midnight mass  
Now said or sung on even this  
Prime festival of Christian bliss.  
In years gone by, those merry devils  
Who led the ' Lord of Misrule's ' revels  
Had roused us long since by their glee

From any casual apathy ;  
But now few rites or pastimes show  
If it be Christmas-tide or no.

Of old too, on our patron's night,  
Great bonfires lit each neighbouring height  
To purge the air from blain and blight,

    Whilst on the Midsum day  
Blithe morrissers in dancing throngs,  
And gleemen, with their jovial songs,  
    Made all the country gay.

The only bonfires now in vogue  
Are lit by some rick-burning rogue,  
Save when, in dull November days,  
May be discerned a feeble blaze—  
A sort of flickering, fiery blot  
In token of the Guy Fawke's plot ;  
Or when a royal jubilee  
Or crowning fills fond folk with glee.  
For me, since old observances  
Have lapsed, 'tis difficult, I wis,  
To tell what time of year it is.

*(The Effigies discuss some present conditions.)*

“ Ah ! ” said St. Peter, “ how things change !  
The modern modes are passing strange ;  
And every day some newer creed  
Is foisted on mankind : indeed,  
So many ‘ cults ’ and ‘ schools of thought,’  
And ‘ churches,’ since the Reformation  
Have risen up and set at naught  
The older notions of the nation,  
To merely call to mind the names

Of half these sects would craze my brains.  
Some people, too, now worship God  
In ways that seem profanely odd ;  
For fashionable parties press  
To 'prayer-parade' in 'evening dress' ;  
And poorer folk, though it sounds funny,  
Enrich the plate with 'button'-money ;  
Whilst in some Yankee churches, girls  
By whistling lull the restless churls."

Quoth Paul, "The old religious sense  
Has waned to blank indifference.  
A vain frivolity obtains,  
And everywhere 'amusement' reigns :  
Plain living and high thinking seem  
To most men now a stupid dream.  
The cleric caste, too, thinks the Church  
Is all its own,—a close 'preserve' ;  
That it alone is the 'body of Christ,'  
Ordained to *rule* and not to *serve* ;  
That common folk are folly-bit  
Who claim a guiding voice in it.  
For me—though dignified restraint  
Is obligatory on a saint—  
I feel, whene'er I hear the hum  
Of the Salvation Army drum  
Or Methodist's loud song,  
Impelled by sympathy to go  
Down to the market-place below  
And hold forth to the throng ;  
Though probably no words avail  
Against the shams that now prevail."



Then answered Peter, "Since I heard  
On Olivet the Master's word  
Strange doings have on earth occurred.  
From what he said or did not say—  
Or we in our poor simple way—  
Men, called theologians, have built up  
Of creeds and dogmas an array  
Would trip the Lord our master up.  
Beliefs are fixed with such precision  
That growth is banished from religion :  
And praters quote, as—' Thus saith Paul '  
Or 'so say Peter, John, and all !'  
I call such license most uncivil,  
As though we countenanced their drivell.  
The critics who the Bible maul,  
On this point claim to know much better,  
And vow we never wrote a letter.  
Then of old customs, as you say,  
Scarce one survives to this late day ;  
And though some feasts and fasts endure,  
The rich—like selfish elves—  
Assign the fasting to the poor  
But keep the feasts themselves.  
The common sports, too, loved of yore,  
Are almost obsolete, no more—  
Imbued with laudable desires—  
Men emulate their sturdier sires ;  
A disappointing race this last,  
That counts life less a boon than trial,  
Dead to the merits of the past,  
And full of doubting and denial."

At this the cock on the steeple top,  
In the pride of a new gilt coat,  
Spun round his perch with a windward hop,  
And huskily cleared his throat  
In an interruptive attempt to crow.  
I heard friend Peter mutter low  
A malediction on the bird,—  
With whom his relations have long been strained  
Because of an incident that occurred  
At Jerusalem, while the Lord was arraigned.  
It seems that when Peter denied our Saviour  
The cock exclaimed so at his behaviour  
That, ever since then, between them has grown  
A frigid unfriendliness of tone.

Meanwhile our friends had reached the door,  
And, as they wended in,  
The groaning hinges backwards bore  
Its oaken frame, until once more  
They latched it on the pin.  
And soon upon the steeple stair  
We heard a thronging tread,  
As up its narrow, winding, way  
Aloft the ringers sped,  
Until they reached that chamber where  
The bells hang overhead.

Then, while a passing stillness came,  
We listened for the sound  
That should the advent news proclaim  
Throughout the valley round :  
And when the deep-mouthed bells were swung,

From every brazen throat  
Such peals of harmony were flung  
That each succeeding note,  
Within, without, and round about,  
Made merry music float ;  
In pleasant concord float.  
(Each bell seemed eager to rehearse  
Its debt to Vine Hall's ear and Hartland's purse.)

Clanged the tuneful and jubilant chorus  
In resonant tones and sonorous ;  
Making anthem-like peans roll o'er us  
That rapt me outright  
In a trance of delight.

And thus, while listening to the chime  
Above me,—loud and clear—  
I thought ' May-be, to grace the time  
And join the chorus here,  
Glad angels from a holier clime  
Have come to tell in song sublime  
The Master's great career ' :  
For, as the ringers rang,  
It seemed as if from out the grey  
Old spire, and starry sphere,  
Bells chimed and seraphs sang  
The following carol roundelay  
To all the world anear.

## The Carol of the Bells.

NOWELLS ! Nowells ! Nowells !

All ye who love the name of Christ

Rejoice !

This is the dawning of that day,

The glorious anniversary

Of that blest morn,

Whereon by God's good plan,

A brother man,—

Raised up amid life's dearth

And sinfulness forlorn

To teach the happier way—

Jesus on earth was born.

Lift up your voice !

Rejoice !

Confess your debt to him,

Who, for two thousand years

Man's counsellor and stay,

Still pleads, sustains, and cheers :

A friend of noble sway.

A friend who came to bring men Life !

Life more ample, sweet, and wide,

From corruption purified

And to greater aims allied.

Blest with rich gifts from God

Though in the world's wealth poor ;

Greatest of all His sons,

And His ambassador,

He in his primal flower,  
"Anointed with the spirit and with power,"  
Strong to endure,  
Came to speed the eternal plan,  
Nurture the divine in man,  
Quicken in him love and trust  
In the true, the good, the just,  
And the rule of Right ensure  
To defeat the evil doer.  
Came that all men might inherit  
A new spirit.

More than other seers he caught  
Sense of God's benignant thought,  
And a better knowledge brought  
The world, as he life's meaning taught.  
On the eternal verities  
Hung the motions of his mind  
Till they in his soul were shrined.  
Soon he saw that vice and strife  
Mar the harmonies of life :  
Proved that evil and deceit  
Are as pitfalls for the feet :  
That dissension brings distress,  
And injustice wretchedness ;  
Casting a discordant curse  
On the conscious universe.

Wherefore he desired to win  
The depraved from ways of sin ;  
And with brethren so beguiled  
Ministered and taught and toiled

To the rescuing of many,  
Nor denied himself to any.  
Strove, as with a tongue of fire,  
Better instincts to inspire  
In the worldly ones of earth ;  
To keep the weak from falling,  
And lift man's thoughts above  
To the mark of his high calling  
And a glad sense of God's love ;  
That he might be reconciled,  
And united in desire  
With his Father—the GREAT SIRE !  
The Creator, Fosterer, Friend,  
Who admitted him to birth,  
Accounted him a Son,  
Endowed him with the earth,  
And may greater gifts intend  
When the sojourn here is done—  
When this life, well lived, shall end.  
For, as the psalmist saith,  
All the issues out of death  
Lie with Him who gave man breath ;  
The Accreditor of Worth !  
Who his children all would cherish,  
And desires that none may perish.

The Divine so breathed in him,  
That, with the priority  
Of its great authority,  
He, rebuking guilt so grim,  
Poured the vials of his wrath  
In its scornfullest degree

On the false-souled devotee  
And the hypocritic tribe—  
Pompous priest and cunning scribe,  
Who, with the deceitful leaven  
Of vain ceremonies, so  
Made their worship like a show  
As to anger slighted heaven.

Preached to many a questioning band  
That God's kingdom was at hand ;  
Bade the wicked contrite stand !  
Read as 'twere from open charts  
The deep secrets of all hearts ;  
Spake in tones that made sin dumb  
Of a judgment day to come ;  
Urged men for the right to strive  
And so save their souls alive ;  
While he, in himself, forsooth—  
As the skies with stars empearled  
In dark night-tide light the world—  
Showed the Way, the Life, the Truth.

Thus, as Heaven's ambassador,  
He on evil ways waged war.  
Sought wrong doing to suppress  
And injustice to redress  
By the grace of Righteousness ;  
By the power, all force above,  
Of a sympathetic Love.  
By forbearance, meek and kind,  
By an all-forgiving mind,  
By provoking no offence,

By supporting innocence,  
And whatever may increase  
Honesty, good-will, and peace.  
Bade men others serve, and try  
To do as they would be done by.  
Told them to let mercy raise  
Justice to a higher phase.  
Said God had more loving choice  
For mercy than for sacrifice ;  
Save that 'self-surrender' bent  
On mankind's more wide content ;  
And was ever prone to bless  
Brotherly unselfishness.

Taught men, to their great surprise,  
Codes of conduct strange yet great ;  
Bade them worldly wealth despise  
And to love their enemies,  
Rendering good to those that hate ;  
Yea, for their souls' better health  
Learn to do such good by stealth ;  
Not in public, or because  
They would win the world's applause.  
Strove their spirits to incline  
In all ways with the divine ;  
And besought them all to cling  
To their Father and their King ;  
Knowing happiness depends  
On behaviour without flaw ;  
On obedience to God's law ;  
On compliance with its ends ;  
On avoidance of all ill ;



On devotion to His will ;—  
Whose yoke is easy and whose burden light  
If taken cheerfully and borne aright.

Preacher and teacher  
Of love to each creature ;  
Sorrow consoling,  
Trouble controlling,  
Soothing life's vexities,  
Solving perplexities,  
Constant in deeds of grace,  
Full of kind pity,  
He with devotion sweet,  
Like a true paraclete,  
Journeyed from place to place  
Village and city :—  
Though he oft-times, be it said,  
' Had not where to lay his head ' ;  
And, while cheering those afaint,  
Was himself a ' man of sorrows '  
Bitterly with grief acquaint.

In many a doubtful mind,  
That with despondence pined,  
Playing this gentle part  
Stablished he hopes of bliss ;  
And the distracted soul  
With precious promises  
Made with new gladness whole.  
For the mourner he was sad  
But felt pleasure with the glad,  
And in festive functions joined

With a sweet congenial mind ;  
Pouring amidst its grief  
Into the sufferer's heart  
Comfort and calm ;  
Sympathy's sweet relief,  
Help's healing balm.  
To the poor in such fashion  
Showed he compassion,  
That all who fared sadly  
Came to him gladly ;  
And with a grateful ken  
Glorified God again  
For such good gifts to men.

Mirror of righteousness,  
Souls none did he condemn,  
But sought to build in them  
God's kingdom surer,  
Fuller and purer.  
Sought to revive,  
And keep alive  
In the mind's shrine  
What is divine ;  
Since there the germs all lie  
Of a great destiny.  
Sought to awake a sense  
Of life's high consequence ;  
How rich endowed it is  
With possibilities ;  
And from low instincts stir  
Upward man's character ;  
So that whilst here he trod

He might grow liker God ;  
All evil things eschew,  
Live out the best he knew,  
And by just aims possessed—  
    In every sphere  
    Of the life here—  
Make the good manifest.  
    Perfect the real,  
    Seek the ideal,  
Leave virtue's light less dim,  
    And the world better,  
    A gratified debtor,  
Better because of him.  
Ne'er was he found remiss  
In the Father's business.  
    Moral obliquity  
And all low aims he fought,  
    Hating iniquity.  
Minds ill-informed he taught,  
And to right knowledge brought ;  
Shaming the will unclean  
Out of the lewd and mean ;  
    Taking occasion,  
    By sweet persuasion,  
    So to endue  
With a more generous thought  
All baser souls distraught  
    By the untrue,  
That they more noble grew ;  
Holding a worthier view  
    Of human duty  
    And being's beauty.

Thus by his loving life,  
And by his gracious ways,  
With an example rife  
Past all dispraise ;  
Filling the teacher's sphere  
Better than all before,  
Made he God's will more clear,  
Raised man's thought higher,  
Prompted his soul to soar,  
Showed him from whence it is  
Come the Great Verities,  
Truths other truths above,  
Righteousness, Peace, and Love,  
Through which alone can grow  
All the bliss man may know.  
Gave him discerning  
Life's duties concerning,  
And manner and mind  
More sweetly refined,  
More kindly inclined :  
His sovereign desire  
Being to draw more near  
God, whom he held so dear,  
God, the GREAT SIRE !  
Those careless children here,  
Who, by scant merit,  
The prospect acquire  
Of heaven, and inherit  
Kinship with him who bade  
Life to arise, and made  
Man in its highest grade,  
God—the GOOD-SPIRIT !

Nowells ! Nowells ! Nowells !

Lift up your voice

And with the bells

Rejoice !

Ye lovers of the Good !

Ye loathers of the Wrong !

Ye strivers for the Right !

Ye scorers of Deceit !

For in your cause he stood

Amid the dubious throng

In temple, mount, and street ;

Rebuking hateful Vice

With Virtue's earnest might,

And questions none might meet.

This did he chiefly teach

And bade his followers preach :—

First—in *God's Fatherhood*,

*Bent on man's greater good*,

*Steadfast reliance* ;—then,

Bound in one brotherhood,

Free from disparity,

Glowing with charity,

*Love to all fellowmen !*

Kindness in thought and deed,

Succour to those in need.

Think on it ye whose greed

Shames a corrupted creed !

How was his loving zeal

For the world's better weal

By man repaid ?  
He was suspected,  
Scorned and rejected,  
Meanly forsaken, then  
By his frail brethren  
Basely betrayed ;  
Ordered to judgment, tried,  
Tortured and crucified,  
And as a felon died.  
Nought might avail !  
This through the Jewish host,  
Kin of his loved the most :  
Sad is the tale !

High on mount Calvary  
Nailed to the woeful tree,  
Earth's noblest martyr, he  
Died of a broken heart  
By man's ingrateness riven ;  
Yet, in the throes of death,  
Sent he with his last breath  
Pleadings to heaven ;  
Prayers to the Lord of All  
That those who wrought his fall  
Might be forgiven :  
Then his life's gentle sway  
Painfully passed away,  
And the dim paths he trod  
Homeward to—God.

In whose realm, with love's impatience  
For the healing of the nations,

Waits he, till the moral leaven  
Which his spirit drew from heaven  
And employed to raise life's worth,  
Shall effect man's better birth ;  
And at length all peoples draw  
To compliance with God's law,  
And so make a heaven of earth ;—  
A happier place for those to come,  
A place where Love shall have her home,  
Where wrong and evil may not be,  
Nor sorrow through iniquity ;  
    A world by good men trod,  
    A real realm of God.

O let the tragic death he died  
For man, in all men's minds abide.  
May his devoted love inspire  
A gratitude time may not tire  
And no indifference tame.  
Let all the race he served so well  
His noble aims and teachings tell ;  
Strive like him life's sores to heal,  
    Joy to sorrowers seek to bring,  
    Lighten human suffering,  
And his sense of service feel.  
May his spirit move men's hearts  
Through old earth's remotest parts,  
    And his influence spread, until  
All who love his gracious name  
Leave untrod the ways of shame  
    And aspire to do God's will.

O what a band were then  
The brotherhood of men ;  
    How vast the noble train !  
O what a happy place,  
With its more perfect race,  
    Earth might remain !  
O what fresh meeds of joy,  
Man, when he came to die,  
    Haply, might gain !  
For, when done this mortal course  
    And his deeds approved, when tried,  
Death's decree might not divorce  
    Dear companions from his side ;  
Since upon the heavenly plain  
Where the Lord of Life doth reign—  
    Led to the Parental side  
    By the loving Christ who died  
    And their trusting justified—  
Worthy souls might live again :  
    And unitedly abide  
In the mansions of the blest,  
In the sacred realms of rest :  
Or, for duteous service here,  
Be assigned a new career  
In some still sublimer sphere.

---

The ringers paused ; the carol strain  
    Seemed ended ; yet the stones,  
Vibrating to the steeple vane,  
With rhythmic cadence hummed again  
    The melody's rich tones.



And, homeward soaring through the sky,  
Methought I saw the angels fly  
Who had so helped our minstrelsy ;  
Whilst, ever and anon, there rang  
    Across heaven's starry span  
Faint echoes of their notes of joy  
As they of Christ-tide sang.

Most sweetly the last chorus ran  
In a down-wafted cry :—  
    *"Peace to the World, Good will to Man,  
Glory to God, most High !"*

And when the flying hours unlocked  
    The golden gates of day,  
Inspiring sounds of happy mirth  
That blest in song the Master's birth,  
His sympathy, his love and worth,  
    Made all the township gay.

A pleasure thrilled me through, I felt  
    Delights I cannot tell ;  
And now, my story done, no more  
Remains to say, yet I would pour  
    A *wish* with my farewell.  
For soon, alas, these lips of mine  
    Will lose their speechful power ;  
The spell that opened them doth fail,  
It matters not—told is my tale—  
    I wait the silent hour !

### The Effigy's Farewell Wish.

BUT this my *wish* ; it is that you,  
Man, woman, youth, and maid ;  
Each heart and home our valley through,  
May find of Love the happy clue  
And bring it to life's aid.

To serve your nation, but help more  
Your less blest fellow-man ;  
For human interests stand before  
The favouring of any shore,  
Or gain of any clan.

May Justice 'gainst all forms of Wrong  
Sustain you in the fight ;  
In potent armour make you strong,  
More fit to face the venal throng  
And battle for the Right.

To quell the brutal and the base,  
The mean, the false, the lewd,  
And what may vitiate the race ;  
To stablish Honour in their place,  
Sweet ways, and all things Good.

To rid of ignorant mistrust  
The bosoms of mankind ;  
False customs and beliefs to thrust  
Aside ; to help the true and just,  
And build the broader mind.

To grace your country, guard its fame,  
And its best powers increase :—  
Not deeming wealth and might a claim  
To real greatness, but the aim  
Of righteous rule and peace.

To make men from dissension free ;  
A cordial band of brothers ;  
Each one inspired in his degree  
With noble aims, and moved to be  
More serviceful to others.

That generous striving may augment  
The measure of life's worth ;  
More knowledge its worst woes prevent,  
More loving kindness bring content  
And heavenly peace on earth.

No rivalry shall there be then  
Whereon joy shall not fall ;  
For it shall be the aim of men  
To pit their powers and prove their ken  
In schemes to gladden all.

Till such blest times may God's regard  
Each fainting soul upraise ;  
That none from helping be debarred,  
And none indifferently retard  
But haste the happy days.

Yea, even now may falterers glean  
Fresh strength with woe to cope ;  
For on all sides can signs be seen  
Of better times than yet have been,  
And rich with larger hope.

Wherefore rejoicing, and not sad,  
I bid you all abide ;  
By trust in God's good will made glad  
Throughout the country wide.  
And may His Plenty cheer your lot,  
His Peace into your hearts be got,  
His Blessing rest on hall and cot  
At every Christmastide.



## NOTES.

THE Author recognises that this STORY and CAROL are not likely to win the complete approval of either orthodox or unorthodox readers ; he hopes also that the piece may not be taken in all respects as an indication of his own real views and convictions. Some of the strictures put into the mouths of the demons may be thought unwarranted, but it will be seen from the notes that they are not altogether groundless. Certain passages may have an air of incongruity, but past and present attributes are not always easily harmonized. The general reader is asked to excuse the introduction of somewhat lengthy references to matters of merely local interest. The Story was first written and published in a much shorter form so long ago as 1869, and was dedicated to the company of Ringers attached to the Church : it then concluded as follows :—

A word for the ringers to follow these rhymes :  
Wherever there lingers a tone of their chimes,  
Whenever old Bromsgrove's bells publish their song,  
Wherever their blithe salutation is flung,  
May welcome await them from all, as their due,—  
Well seasoned with praise,—and between me and you,  
Their musical ears—it is easy to think—  
Would be gladdened in turn if silver should chink.  
And ringers, like singers, find wetting their throats  
Gives strength to their elbows and tone to their notes ;  
Also, friend, in a whisper this hint let me slip,  
If they have a strong weakness it is for egg-flip.

The latter allusion being to a custom which once prevailed in the locality of regaling the ringers and waits with egg-flip and other viands on Christmas morning.

To avoid interrupting the perusal of the pece for reference to various points, no note-marks appear in the text; but the following observations relate to statements on different pages, thus :—T means top part of page; M—middle; B—bottom.

PAGE 5. M.—In the Art of the middle ages special symbols were employed to identify the figures of particular saints. Thus, St. John the Baptist is generally represented—as in this instance—wearing a garment of camel's skin, and with a lamb and banner. Sometimes, I believe, he is depicted with his head in his hand, in token of his decapitation by Herod. St. Peter is generally shown holding two keys (this symbol being derived from the passage in St. Matthew's Gospel, c. xvi. 19th verse). The keys are supposed to signify, the one the key of heaven and the other the key of hell. The former was often shown of gold, and the latter of silver. The emblem of St. Paul was usually a sword, this being the instrument of his martyrdom (he is supposed to have been beheaded near Rome). The Apostles, as bearers of the gospel, are also often shown holding books, as well as with their other emblems. Mediaeval artists and sculptors are said to have followed very generally a sort of guide book compiled about the 11th century from the works of a Christian Greek painter named Panselinos. In this book and others based upon it, Peter is described as having had a short beard and Paul a long beard.

I may say in regard to these steeple figures that their identification is not altogether free from doubt. Habingdon, who wrote about 1600—1647, says:—"You may see aloft on the west syde of the steeple three statues which I conceive to bee St. John the Baptist betweene St. Peter and St. Paule." This statement Nash the historian of Worcestershire confirms. Noake, who visited the church some time prior to 1848, says the figures represent St. Peter, St. John and the Virgin. The central figure undoubtedly stands for St. John the Baptist, on his left hand being St. Paul, with a sword; but the northernmost statue (on the central figure's right hand) is more doubtful. The head of this statue is rather feminine in appearance and the keys are so obliterated that they might readily be taken for "lilies"—an emblem of the Virgin Mary—but the display of what seems a book (gospel) in the left hand, coupled with what appear to be keys in the right, prove, I think, that St. Peter is intended. It is possible that the weather may have worn away his beard, leaving him unlike the virile man he is usually portrayed.

PAGE 7. T.—This reference to the trees involves a poetical anachronism, as they were not planted until a comparatively recent period; though there may have been, and probably were, trees round the churchyard at the time referred to. The present trees are said to have been planted in 1792, but I think it is doubtful whether they are quite as old as this date would imply, as the lime tree is a rapid grower.

PAGE 8. T.—As to the Stafford Chantry (suppressed presumably with chantries generally in 37 Henry VIII.—1545-6) it was supposed by Nash that the present vestry was the old chantry chapel. This is most probable, and if so there must have been, according to the Chantry Endowment Deed, an altar in it to the Virgin Mary. It is difficult now, owing to changes and restorations, to decide exactly what the pre-Reformation arrangements were. If the vestry was not the old chantry chapel then the latter was probably either at the east end of the north or south aisles, enclosed most likely from the church by an oak screen. There is a fine piscina in the south aisle, indicating that an altar stood there in the 13th century. Noake, who visited the church prior to 1848, says the Shrewsbury (Talbot) family had a private chapel, still in existence (then), in the south aisle.

According to Habingdon, who probably visited the church and who wrote his survey at the beginning of the 17th century, the tomb of Sir Humphrey Stafford and Eleanor his wife stood then in the "myddest of the chauncell," whilst on the north side of the chancel was a raised tomb to Elizabeth, the first wife of Sir Gilbert Talbot (who was the first Talbot who "dwealt at Grafton") and on the right hand of this tomb, "somewhat higher," was the goodly tomb of Sir John Talbot and his two wives. So many large tombs must have pretty well filled the chancel. All these tombs are said to have been removed from their places by Mr. Waugh (vicar about 1754). Whether they stand now approximately as he removed

them, or were further disturbed at the restoration of the church in 1858-9, I do not know. In 1887 those in the north aisle were removed a yard or two from where they had previously stood, to accommodate new work to the organ.

The Staffords of Grafton connected with the chantry are of the time of Henry VI. and Edward IV., and, as it would be about this period when the tower and spire were built and other work of the same style done in the church, I think it extremely likely that Sir Humphrey Stafford and his dame Elianor (or their son Humphrey) were largely concerned in such additions. The altar of their chantry being dedicated to the Virgin Mary gives some color to the opinion that one of the figures on the west face of the tower may stand for the Virgin and not for Saint Peter.

The younger Humphrey Stafford was executed at Tyburn as a traitor, and the Grafton estates were given by Henry VII. to Sir Gilbert Talbot, son of John, second Earl of Shrewsbury, who supported Henry on Bosworth Field.

PAGE 12. T.—Jesus tells his disciples (John xiv. 2) "I go to prepare a place for you," whereas in Matt. xxv. 34, he speaks of them inheriting a kingdom already prepared "from the foundation of the world." There have been several professed re-incarnations of Jesus even in our own country. In Cromwell's day a mad religious enthusiast, one James Naylor of Bristol, created a great sensation, and was the subject of long discussions in Parliament and in the churches on account of his claims in this respect. Then a deluded and dropsical woman, named Joanna Southcote (1800), believed, and caused many credulous people to believe, that she was about to give birth to a new incarnation of Christ. Even now, at the very time of writing this, a clerical gentleman at London, named Pigott, proclaims himself of divine origin: professes, in fact, to be "The Messiah." Thus from time to time do "false prophets" rise up among us.

PAGE 13. T.—In representing the effigy as endowed with the power of warding off evil spirits, I have not trespassed far beyond the mark which the superstitious of mediæval times set up; and as regards bells (page 27), it was then, and is now, customary in the Roman Catholic Church to baptise and consecrate them; the faithful believing, presumably, that such ceremonies render them efficacious against the machinations of demons and the destructive force of lightning and tempests. The numerous instances, however, in which religious edifices, including Bromsgrove Church, have been injured by the electric current, prove the vanity of at least this last belief, though it is recorded that even as recently as the year 1852 the Bishop of Malta endeavoured to "lay a storm" by commanding the church bells to be rung. I have seen it stated, on the authority of Fuller, that in the old clock tower, which stood opposite the north-east transept of Worcester Cathedral (and which was pulled down by the Parliamentarians in the year 1647) were two bells, and on the clock bell the following old Latin inscription was engraved—

En Ego Campana, nunquam denuncio vana,  
Laudo Deum verum, plebem voco, congrego clerum.

Funera plango,  
Fulgura frango,  
Oblata } pango.  
Sabata }  
Excito lentos,  
Dissipo ventos,  
Paco cruentos.

Translated by Fuller as follows—

"Men's deaths I tell  
By doleful knell.  
Lightning and thunder  
I break asunder.  
On Sabbath all  
To church I call.  
The sleepy head  
I raise from bed.  
The winds so fierce  
I do disperse.  
Men's cruel rage  
I do assuage.

The inscription has also been rendered thus—

"Death's tale I tell, the winds dispel, ill-feeling quell,  
The slothful shake, the storm-clouds break, the Sabbath wake."

In addition to the instances of damage to the building by lightning referred to in the late W. A. Cotten's book on Bromsgrove Church, it may be mentioned that a paragraph in the *Worcestershire Chronicle* for 1846 states that the church was struck by lightning that year for the third time within fourteen years—one of the buttress stones being dislodged, the clock injured, and other damage done.

At the end of October, 1891, owing to injury caused previously by lightning, or through recent gales, a large stone fell from the top of the spire, more than 190 feet, into the churchyard below. A public meeting was called to consider the repair of the spire, and at this meeting the late Mr. Housman, solicitor, stated that "he had known the church struck three times by lightning." As a result of the meeting, the repair of the spire was undertaken by Mr. Jos. Blackburn, of Nottingham (steeple-jack), at a cost of from £250 to £300; and about 25 ft. of the apex of the spire was rebuilt and other repairs effected. When the upper part of the steeple was pulled down, in November, 1891, there was found incised on the stone immediately beneath the finial, the following inscription in inch letters—

New spindle 19 ft.  
long and new stone  
from the bottom of it.

1836.

Joseph Rose,  
Sexton.

PAGE 16. M.—As to slavery, the Church as an institution did little to oppose or abolish it, though in many cases it ameliorated it. Individuals, however, such as Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester, preached strongly against the irreligion and cruelty of slave dealing. Wulfstan probably saw much of it, as Bristol was anciently in the Worcester diocese and was the great port of the slave trade with Ireland and the Continent, English men, women, and children (in Anglo-Saxon times) being sold in Bristol market like cattle, and shipped off in great numbers. The Church, as the greatest landowner of the Middle Ages, was too much interested in preserving Christian bondage to suppress the feudal serfdom on its estates, especially as it seemed to have some scriptural warranty for so doing (see *Leviticus* xxv. 44—46). Sometimes freemen sold themselves to churches and monasteries for the sake of the supposed benefit of the clerical prayers. The serf of the Middle Ages had few rights: he could be transferred, with the land he worked upon, to other owners. The killing of a serf by his master was often commuted by the payment of a small pecuniary fine. "We find the Church decreeing that a lady who had beaten her slave to death should be punished by abstaining from butcher-meat for a few days." In Scotland and the north of England up to the beginning of the 19th century, salters and coal miners, with their families, could not work except in the mines they were attached to, and were disposed of with the pits, &c. As to Negro slavery, so late as 1771 a black boy was sold by public auction in the cathedral city of Lichfield, and the only religious body in England that strove and tried to influence Parliament for its suppression was the Society of Friends (Quakers), about 1788.

PAGE 17. T.—"We live in the midst of a Society as corrupt as that of the Roman Empire."—*Massini*.

The Rev Dr. Cobb (Bishopsgate, London) said "he was appalled by the dominant paganism of this great city."—*London Echo*, Oct. 16th, 1902.

In America mob law prevails to such an extent that lynching and burning of negro offenders often occurs. In September of this year 'of our Lord,' 1902, excursion trains were run at Corinth, Mississippi, to enable people to see such a spectacle. Seats were reserved for women and reporters; the negro was dragged out of jail and burned alive on faggots soaked in oil.—See *Birmingham Daily Mail*, Sept. 30th, 1902. Can Nero be reproached after this?

PAGE 19. T.—Over 30 per cent. of the population of London are living below the poverty line.—*Charles Booth*. Seven and a-half millions of people are at present living in England below the poverty line.—*Masterman*. One-third of the population of York are living in a state of starved and stunted existence.—*Rowntree*.

50,000 to 25,000 vagrant-children try to get a living in the streets of London.



The Zulu kraal affords better accommodation than many dwellings in London.—*Bishop Wilkinson.*

In Bristol some of the poor were in such distress for food that they actually went into the suburbs of Clifton and picked the snails off the garden walls to eat.—*Rev. E. Despard. (Morning Leader, London, March 14th, 1902.)*

A girl book-folder in London said she was paid *one halfpenny* for folding the printed sheets of the whole of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The master said "you know I can't pay more for Bibles. Religious work don't pay."—*London Echo, January 4th, 1902.*

PAGE 21. T.—Disraeli has somewhere stated that the English peerage is derived from three sources—"the spoliation of the Church; the open and flagrant sale of its honors by the elder Stuarts; and the borough-mongering of our own times."

Why the Church has always been so partial to the Aristocracy is a puzzle difficult to solve, except on the principle that it loves the hand that has chastened it. Lords, and Court sycophants, have been its worst plunderers.

PAGE 21. B.—As to the responsibility of the Church, this statement has, of course, much less application to present than to former conditions, when its legal powers were much more extensive. For a long time no one could hold any public office unless he was a member of the Church of England. From the time of Elizabeth down to 1779 (when schoolmasters were relieved from signing the Thirty-nine Articles) the Church had, generally speaking, a monopoly of the education of the country, such as it was, no one being allowed to publicly keep a school except a member of the Church of England licensed by the bishop, and it was not until 1854 that Nonconformists were allowed to enter the Universities, and not until 1871 that they could hold offices or fellowships. Of the suppression and disablement of Catholics, Jews, and Dissenters since the Reformation until recent years, and of Press Censorship, it is needless to speak. There is, I believe, an Act of Elizabeth still unrepealed (?) by which all persons absenting themselves from the Church services on Sundays are liable to a fine of one shilling. People were also expected, under penalty I think, to keep the Church's fasting ordinances. In Bromsgrove, in 1673, according to the parish books, the sum of £4, levied on persons not coming to church, was applied to prelate apprentices. (As to this last see W. A. Cotton's *Bromsgrove Church*).

PAGE 23. T.—"Is it not a patent fact that the influence of the Church (of England) is waning?—How can the Church lead the Nation when those who should be guides are pointing and pushing in opposite directions?" *Church Times*, Aug. 15th, 1902.—(The same paper publishes a letter referring to certain clerics taking part in *Ladies' hat-trimming and Duster-washing Competitions*).

PAGE 23. M.—To give the devil his due in speaking of Disendowment, we must take him as mainly referring to pre-Reformation property, as tithes and glebes, and not to the more modern gifts and endowments of Churchmen to the Church of England since Church rates were abolished. There are modern cases, however, which affect the public interest, as for instance when (from 1806 to 1817) Acts of Parliament were passed "for the erection and endowment of four new churches at an estimated cost to the ratepayers (London) of £170,000. The ratepayers were to find the money but the Duke of Portland was to have the right of presentation." A further Act, passed in 1817, gave the Duke £40,000 for his rights as rector and patron of these churches so created by public taxation.—See *Our Old Nobility*, by Howard Evans.

PAGE 23. B.—In this year, 1902, there have been about 30 livings for sale in the diocese of Norwich alone.

It is said that in the authorised version of the New Testament alone the recent revisers made upwards of 36,000 alterations in corrections of text, translation, and punctuation, for the new version.

PAGE 24. T.—A former curate of Alvechurch, a Mr. Bleasby, was forced by poverty this year (1902) to resort to Tiverton Workhouse. He had been a curate 23 years, and had made 470 applications for a curacy. He said vicars wanted "only young curates."

The Bishop of London said in 1901 that 1341 clergymen in England and Wales are living on stipends of only £65.

Out of fifty incumbents of London's "fat livings," twenty-six are non-resident, yet they draw incomes rising to £2000 a year without discharging any duties

whatever, and some of them let, and enjoy the rents of, their city parsonages as well.—*London Echo*, October 1st, 1902.

10,000 unbeneficed clergymen are unrepresented in the councils of the Church.—*London Daily Mail*, June 4th, 1901.

PAGE 24. M.—“What has become of the millions who ought to come to church, but who prefer to stay away? . . . The shopkeepers and artisans have gone to dissent, and the labourers have gone to the devil.”—*Dr. Littledale*.

“I do not think that the cultured laity are giving up religion; but they are ceasing to look for it to the churches: looking rather to writers like Carlyle, Tennyson, and Ruskin. There seems a danger that the public worship of Christianity may be left to the clergy, to women, to the uneducated.”—*Dr Percy Gardner*.

If they took the last census, there ought to be 37,000 more scholars in attendance on the Sabbath, but instead of that they had a decrease of 16,000.—*Mr. H. R. Mansfield* at Spalding.

PAGE 24. B.—The old Faiths, founded on so-called “revelation,” have long been tested and are found wanting.—*Sir H. Thompson*, on *The Unknown God*. “A great part of the historical substratum which is supposed to support many of the doctrines and beliefs of Christianity is in a ruinous condition.”—*Dr. Percy Gardner*, *Exploratio Evangelica*.

“An Anglican theologian of eminence, the clerical head of an Anglican college, preaching and administering the sacraments in that capacity, comes, as we learn from his biography, to the conclusion that the historical evidences of Christianity reduce themselves to a single document, not now existing, about which we know nothing, except that it formed the basis of the synoptic gospels. To such a pass has come the critical inroad upon the foundations of revealed Christianity.”—*Professor Goldwin Smith*, in *Contemporary Review*, December, 1900.

“The gospels are not proved to be the work of contemporary writers; they are not trustworthy in their accounts of the most ordinary occurrences; and the evidence which they offer for extraordinary events is even less than that which they offer for very ordinary statements. . . . If we (ministers of the Church of England) choose to take such portraiture (as given in the gospel narratives) as absolutely faultless, it is we only who are to blame, and we must pay the penalty; and the penalty is the necessity of speaking to the ignorant or half-educated, or the unthinking, in terms which for us involve a habit of dishonesty. Such a habit must eventually be fatal in any religious body.”—*The Four Gospels as Historical Records* (Ascribed to the late Rev. Sir George Cox.)

“The dividers of mankind which have roused deathless hates, and stained the fair earth with blood, are the doctrines which are either beyond proof or the falseness of which is now clear.”—*Ed. Clodd*, *Jesus of Nazareth*.

“Delusion and error do not perish by controversial warfare. They perish under the slow and silent operation of changes to which they are unable to adapt themselves. The atmosphere is altered: the organism can neither respond nor respire; therefore it dies. Thus has perished belief in witchcraft; thus, too, is slowly perishing belief in miracles, and, with this, belief in the miraculous events—the incarnation, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus—on which the fundamental tenets of Christianity are based, and in which lies so largely the secret of its long hostility to knowledge.”—*Ed. Clodd*—*Pioneers of Evolution*.

“Christianity without miracles and without dogmatic theology is not only practicable but has sufficed for some of the best Christians that ever lived. It is probably the religion of most educated laymen in the Church of England to-day.”—*Herbert W. Paul*, on *Matthew Arnold*.

“The religion of Nature—which is based upon the determination not to believe anything which is not supported by indubitable evidence—must eventually become the faith of the future. . . . It is one in which a priestly hierarchy has no place, nor are there any specified formularies of worship. For, ‘Religion ought to mean simply reverence and love for the Ethical ideal, and the desire to realise that ideal in life.’ (*Huxley*.)” “The day is probably not far distant when the religious part of the community will be divided into two distinct camps or classes, viz., first those who enjoy complete liberty of thought and action, and practice the manly virtues associated therewith: and, secondly, those who become devotees of the old Papal Church, which denounces the exercise of reason and enquiry into all matters connected with religion, and demands implicit obedience; offering to her votaries in return . . . an ultimate admission by the gate of St. Peter to the society of the blessed for evermore—a well-organised hierarchy which has exercised a vast influence on human affairs for many ages, and may continue to do so for two or

three more to come, but must eventually entirely disappear."—*Sir H. Thompson, on The Unknown God.*

"The only hope for the Church of the 20th century is that it should make a clean sweep of 1900 years of theology and get back to Christ."—*Rev. H. R. Haweis.*

"Every system must be plastic to the extent that the growth of knowledge demands."—*Tyndall.*

PAGE 25. M.—"So far as discipline is concerned it must be acknowledged that the Church of England has ceased to be an Episcopal Church."—*Sir William Harcourt.*

PAGE 26. M.—"Missionaries are not popular at the Foreign Office. . . . They have a proverb in the East—'First the Missionary, then the Consul, then the General'; and that, as a matter of fact, has been too often the case."—*Lord Salisbury* (at Exeter Hall, 1900).

The early colonists of Australia often hunted the kangaroo and the black man together; and one of the practices frequently resorted to for destroying the natives was to lay poisoned food in places where they were sure to find it.—See *Australia Old and New*, by *Grattan Grey*.

PAGE 31. M.—In olden times it was believed that on Christmas Eve warlocks, witches, and evil spirits generally, had no power of mischief.

PAGE 31. B.—"Tom's Monument" is the local appellation given to a diminutive and time-worn effigy, with obliterated features, lying on the north wall of the churchyard. Tradition has it that Tom, who was a dwarf, sold himself for some worldly consideration to the devil, but with the proviso that at his death if he could not be buried *in* the churchyard he should not be buried *out of it*. At his decease the difficulties of the situation were solved by the burial of Tom's body immediately *beneath* the wall dividing the consecrated graveyard from the adjoining road—a road which in the author's boyhood was often called "Mad Bessie's Lane," for the reason stated in the poem. Tom's monument, whatever and wherever it may have been first of all, is not now in its original position, as the ground where it lies was only attached to the churchyard about 1820. It is said that the stone figure was then moved from the old boundary wall to its present place.

PAGE 33. M.—In the evening of March 22nd, 1879, John Rose, the sexton, met with his death in the way described; a lid-hole (for hoisting the bells) having been negligently left open in the belfry floor.

PAGE 34. T.—John the Baptist (whose effigy is supposed to be speaking) was decapitated by Herod Antipas at the instigation of Herodias, because John had rebuked Herod for marrying the latter, who was his sister-in-law (Mark vi.) The head of the saint is said to be buried in the great mosque of Omeiyades at Damascus, which was once a Christian Church, and before that in part a Roman temple. The Moslems regarded John as a holy man and preserved his relics. A chest is said to have been uncovered in this church in ancient times, bearing the inscription—"This is the head of John, son of Zacharias." As there are said to have been heads of John the Baptist at Amiens Cathedral and other places on the Continent, this particular head may be looked upon as that of John as a "young man." Relics of the Baptist were much resorted to in the middle ages, as he was always a popular saint, and, in England particularly, was regarded as the great saint of the people. Bromsgrove Church being dedicated to him, it is probable that in pre-Reformation times there was embedded in the great altar stone, or attached to it, some reputed relic of the saint, to satisfy the custom and credulity of the period. George IV. had (at Hanover) one of the Baptist's teeth, and there is said to have been another preserved at Canterbury Cathedral.

PAGE 34. B.—Three bodies are said to have been dug up and taken from the churchyard in 1829 by men called "body snatchers," who stole newly-buried bodies and sold them to medical men for anatomical purposes.

PAGE 37. T.—According to the newspapers of May, 1901, "Society" people of the West End of London introduced the fashion of attending "after dinner service" in evening dress, at St. George's Chapel, Albermarle Street. About the same time the Rev. Carlile, at his East End Church, St. Mary-at-Hill, introduced a free supply of "buttons," of the appearance of sixpences, for poor people without money to put into the collection if they so desired. In 1902, newspaper paragraphs stated that in a certain prominent New York Church a young lady of great whistling ability used to entertain the congregation with her solos.

PAGE 37. M.—In early Christian times (see Acts xv.) "the apostles and the elders and the whole church" used to confer together on the work of the church; but soon (and especially after Constantine patronized christianity and made the church a State institution) the official element—the clergy—made themselves masters; and entirely muzzled what is now called the laity; allowing the latter no voice whatever in church doctrine, teaching, or discipline. To question priestly decisions was heresy.

PAGE 38. M.—With respect to the canonical Pauline epistles, the later criticism . . . has learned to recognise that they are none of them by Paul. They are all . . . pseudepigrapha (this, of course, not implying the least depreciation of their contents). Of the two epistles attributed to Peter, the first, in the opinion of Dr. Cone, is not of the apostolic age, and the second epistle is still later. The three epistles ascribed to John, the son of Zebedee, are certainly not by him.—See *Encyclopædia Biblica*, edited by Rev. Dr. Cheyne (Canon of Rochester), and Rev. J. S. Black.

PAGE 40. T.—In 1897 the bells were rehung in new frames, with new fittings, and the 8th bell was re-cast by Barwell, of Birmingham, who did the work. The cost, about £250, was borne Mr. E. Hartland, of Bromsgrove. The chimes were restored at the same time by public subscription.

PAGE 41. T.—Nowells! (from *nouvelles*, "tidings") an Anglo-Norman word used in old English carols. The year of Jesus' birth, like so much more concerning him, is doubtful. He was born it is said before the death of Herod the Great, which occurred in 750 (Roman calendar), and this would be four years *before* the Christian era. December 25th was only fixed as his birthday in the 4th century A.D.; and it is singular that this day before then had been specially devoted to the worship of Mithra, the sun god, as the "birthday of the unconquered Sun," it being the time of the winter solstice.—See *Jesus of Nazareth*, by Ed. Clodd.

PAGE 51. T.—The whole of the Judas betrayal story is now dismissed by some biblical critics as fiction. It is for preachers of the text to reconcile matters with the critics.

PAGE 41 to 53.—The message of Jesus is "simpler than the Churches would like to think it—the Gospel as Jesus proclaimed it has to do with the Father only, and not with the Son. This is no paradox, nor, on the other hand, is it "rationalism," but the simple expression of the actual fact as the Evangelists give it."—*Harnack—What is Christianity—1901*.

Views of Jesus are so conflicting that this rhythmic picture of his character and teaching is not likely to satisfy partisans—it will fall short for some and be too fulsome for others. In the creeds he is accounted both God and Man—"Perfect God and Perfect Man." An eminent theologian recently deceased has said: "Of anything more spiritually perfect than the meek yet majestic Jesus no heart can ever dream." While an ex-clergyman of the Church of England says: "I would undertake to prove that Egypt, Assyria, India, Greece and Rome had produced specimens of moral beauty superior to that of Jesus Christ." Professor Goldwin Smith, in the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1900, states that: "Even an official, and it may be supposed conservative, theologian such as a professor of theology in the University of Berlin, denies that either the Jesus of history or the Pauline Christ is for us a binding object of faith."

The Rev. Dr. A. B. Bruce speaks of the limitation of the vision of Jesus as to the future, and says *he was the child of his time and people* (thus implying no supernatural element in his life and career). Dr. Freemantle (Dean of Ripon) and others hold, apparently, similar views, and advocate "natural christianity" as against supernatural views of it.—1902.

It must be borne in mind that practically nothing is known of Jesus from his birth until he was about thirty years of age (except his alleged appearance as a boy in the temple). His whole public ministry, according to the three synoptic gospels, lasted only about a year, though, according to the fourth gospel, it lasted about three years. Outside references to Jesus are very few, and some of these have been tampered with.

In writing the Carol it was necessary for me to interpret the song of the bells of an orthodox church in a fairly orthodox manner. Apart from this—out of reverence for his beneficent spirit (assuming the gospels to have at least a basis of truth)—I hope I have expressed nothing in the poem to lessen anyone's veneration for Jesus, and regard for his exalted character as a moral teacher.

## Nails Old and New,

SOME MEMORIES AND SUGGESTIONS.

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(Written on picking one up during the Nailmakers' Strike, 1892).

### I.

**ONLY** an inch of old iron, headed and pointed, a NAIL!  
Battered and bent and discarded; Shall I detail  
The incidents pictured before me, as, roughened with rust,  
By the roadway my roving eye noticed it, laid in the dust?  
A product of labour and pains, a relic long wrought,  
A sign of necessity conquered by man's scheming thought,  
Let it not be despised though betrod 'neath the traveller's feet,  
For service and usefulness merit appreciance meet.  
Caught up from the path where it perished, alongside the ditch,  
It pictures me stirring events, with rare interest rich.  
Pricking Fancy it wakens remembrance and brings back the past,  
Linking thought like a magnet to memories vanishing fast.  
My childhood again is recalled, and a Mid-England town,—  
Red houses beside the long street, with tiled roofs mossy-brown.  
In mother-arms held at the window, I watch, o'er the way,  
A turbaned Turk's head on an inn sign, fierce-whiskered and grey,  
And back in the distance tall poplars that restlessly sway.  
I hear, with the song that she sings me in lullaby tones,  
The noise of the nailshops, the ringing of hammers, the groans  
Of deep-heaving bellows, the "oliver's" thud on the die,  
And deem it all music intended alone for my joy.  
Peering out through the darkness at nightfall I see, in a stream,  
Golden sparks flying upward to starland from chimneys that gleam.  
Aglow are the numerous forge fires, astir too are folk by the score,  
Out of the hot iron fashioning nails such as this one, galore.  
My young eyes were then too entranced to see over all Want's sad sore.

As a boy, to the neighbouring nailshops I rove,  
In search of fresh wonders, and there—  
Through casements—behold wheezy bellows a-play,  
The work-blocks and tools, battered walls grimy grey,  
And amidst all the fire with its flare.

On tip-toe, sometimes, o'er the low doors I look  
With delight at the toilers within ;  
Men, women, and children, a family band,  
Stooping low to their labour with hammers in hand,  
And with song adding cheer to the din.

I watch them lay hold on the bellows, to raise  
The glow of the hearth-gleeds, and then  
Draw quickly the rods from the fire, white with heat,  
The ends into points on a small anvil beat,  
Cut off, put a head to, and fashion complete  
As a Nail, for the service of men.

A Nail ! of all objects most useful, and yet—  
Like its makers—but poorly esteemed ;  
Ah, who shall assess its true value, although  
To be purchased so cheaply, or from the past show  
Who may its inventor be deemed ?

I think of the Ark and its building,  
Of Tubal who first wrought in iron,  
Of nails which King David got ready,  
And those which in Solomon's temple  
Affixed the gold plates to the ceiling,  
Themselves in fine gold fifty shekels.  
Of Sisera's death—the great captain  
Whom Israel vanquished at Tabor ;

How, from the foe flying for refuge,  
He entered the tent of fair Jael,  
And there fell asleep in his hiding,  
Asleep unto death—past all waking ;  
For did not the hand of the woman  
Drive boldly a nail through his temples,  
And smite off his head when he perished ;  
As Deborah sings in the scriptures ?

I think of the legend of Magnes,  
A shepherd—the slave of Medea—  
Who, climbing the slopes of Mount Ida,  
Was suddenly checked in his progress  
And held to the rock by his shoe nails ;  
In this way discovering the loadstone,  
Which thence bore his name in the ‘ *magnet*.’  
I think of those nails of the ancients  
Found in Babylonian cities  
And used to ward off evil spirits.  
Supposed to possess magic virtues  
When thrust in the ground beneath buildings,  
They quelled subterranean demons.

I think of old nails at Mycenæ,  
Found fixed in the vault of Atreus,  
The place where he hoarded his treasure.  
Ere brazing and solder were thought of  
They fastened the plates of bronze metal  
Which sheathed all the stony interior.  
Of those, too, entitled *trabales*,  
That served those rare builders the Romans  
For fixing the beams of their structures ;

And then of the spikes, with gold bosses,  
That decked the great doors of their temples.  
Of the tale somewhere told of Cambyses,  
The Persian, who, finding his judges  
Inclined to be biassed and partial,  
Flayed one for collusive wrong doing,  
And then in the great hall of Justice,  
To stimulate legal propriety,  
Nailed his skin on the bench as a cushion.

I think of the nails with chased scrolling—  
Made finely in gold, bronze, and silver—  
Which served classic ladies for hair pins.  
One Fulvia used as a dagger,  
When, mad with vindictive resentment,  
She brutally outraged dead Cicero ;  
For, the murdered man's head by her orders  
Being brought her, she pulled from his still lips  
The tongue, and repeatedly stabbed it ;  
That tongue which had censured her husband  
And whose truth her own act gave proof of,  
Since it said once " no animal living  
Could be so revengeful as woman."  
Ah, what a sad fate was great Tully's !  
Struck down by an enemy's hirelings,  
His head and his hands were lopped from him,  
And cruelly carried as trophies  
To Rome, where, nailed up in the Forum—  
On that very rostrum from whence he  
Had so often thrilled the pleased people—  
They witnessed to Antony's vengeance.



I think of the bronze nails which shipwrights  
Of olden time used in their vessels.  
Of the hob-nails which shod the bold legions  
That trod British soil first with Cæsar ;  
And how—in their earliest ages—  
A record of time on Jove's Temple  
Was kept by the primitive Romans,  
By driving great nails each September  
Deep into the walls of the cella,  
With grave and precise ceremonial.  
The peasants, too, fixed in their house walls—  
As country folk here fasten horse shoes—  
Large spikes, to keep evil from entering.  
I think of Attilius Regulus,  
The consul and brave Roman general,  
Who, from his drear prison at Carthage,  
Was freed and sent home on a mission  
To broach terms of peace to his people ;—  
Which terms he persuaded the Romans  
To join with one voice in rejecting.  
His word pledged to come back to Carthage,  
He at his life's risk brought the answer,  
And was cruelly killed for his courage.  
With eye-brows torn off he was fastened  
For days 'neath the broiling sun, naked ;  
Then, finally, in a great barrel,  
Whose staves were with spike nails surrounded  
Like the ribs of the ' Nuremberg Maiden,'  
Men rolled him till death stayed his sufferings.  
In a similar way did Saint George die,  
The mythical patron of England.

I think of the nails which pierced Jesus,  
And then of strange tales that concern them :  
How, crossing the sea in a tempest  
Which threatened her ship with destruction,  
To still the wild rage of the waters  
One was thrown to the waves by St. Helen,  
Who found the " true cross " at Jerusalem.  
The two that remained she presented,  
As old Sir John Mandeville mentions,  
To her son—King of ' Constanynoble,'  
Who had one forged into a ' brydille,'  
For use on ' hys hors ' when in ' batayle ' ;  
That thus, by its magical virtues,  
He might overthrow all opponents.  
The other—which passed to pope Gregory—  
Was given to queen Theodolinda,  
Who had it beat into a circlet,  
And covered with gold and rare jewels  
As head-band, or crown, for her husband.  
Long preciousely held as a relic,  
It crowned the old kings of the Lombards  
Through conquering Charlemagne downwards ;  
Till Bonaparte daringly placed it,  
Himself, on his bold brow at Milan ;  
Declaring that " God gave it to him  
And woe should befall whoe'er touched it."  
By Austria borne off from Monza,  
At length unto Victor Emanuel  
It passed, and from him to king Humbert.

## II.

Ah ! what memories crowd upon me  
In connection with the past,  
Nails enshrined in ancient story,  
Nails whose interest shall last.

Thought, with realistic vision,  
Bears me back on Fancy's tide,  
Till at old Wigornia's minister,  
On the great oak door outside,

I behold—all red and reeking—  
Nailed across the bloody boards,  
An integument extended,  
Gashed with wounds of knives and swords.

I am told it is a Dane's skin,  
From some robber freshly flayed,  
Some bold pirate newly captured,  
By cupidity betrayed.

With his fellows he had ravaged  
The cathedral-church and town,  
Sacked the monastery cloisters,  
Pulled the holy altars down,  
And the ' sanctus-bell ' was boldly  
Bearing off to Severn shore,  
Where his comrades, with the plunder,  
Hoisted sail and plied the oar ;

When the frightened monks in hiding,  
To avenge his godless quest,  
Made a prisoner of the laggard  
As he sped to join the rest :

And they wreaked their wrath upon him,  
For his sacrilege so dread,  
In excruciating tortures ;  
Then, before his breath had fled,  
Stripped the skin from off his body,  
And affixed it, flecked with gore,  
As a trophy of their vengeance—  
And a warning—on their door.

Perhaps the very nails made use of  
In this barbarous business then  
Were from Alcester a tribute,  
Or produced by Bromsgrove men.

---

Yes, visions float before my gaze !  
I see a sturdy priest,  
And other church-door nailing-deeds  
Whose influence has not ceased.

Great risk lay in such doing then  
When that intrepid man,  
Brave Luther, first at Wittenberg  
Provoked the Pontiff's ban,  
And, posting up his theses there  
With bold protesting blows,  
' Beat holes in Friar Tetzels drum '  
And startled Rome's repose.

Yes ! to spiritual liberty  
That nailing woke the world,  
And a soul-oppressing incubus  
Was from man's bosom hurled.

The nations—long priest-ridden—  
To enfranchisement laid claim ;  
And shook the Papal fetters off—  
Their terror, and their shame.

The nails, by Luther used, soon felt  
That bonfire's glowing heat,  
Which burned Rome's angry edict up  
In the rejoicing street.

Its light of dawning Reason lit  
The monk-holds, veiled and dark,  
And Superstition's bogies fled  
Affrighted at its spark.

Let me tell, too, this tale of a Seaman who fought  
In the reign of our king George the third,  
When Frenchmen and Dutch to invade Ireland sought,  
And, sailing from Texel, De Winter had thought  
To swoop on our coasts undeterred.

But his raid was prevented, for, lying in wait,  
Bold Duncan attacked him at sea ;  
And broke through his line like a bull through a gate,  
And captured and sunk all his ships, except eight  
Which sped to the bleak Zuyder Zee.

It was when they fought fiercest, and victory hung  
In the scale, that our colours o'er head  
Were shot from the admiral's top mast, and flung  
In a heap on the taffrail, about which they clung  
Like a pall o'er the limbs of the dead.

Our captains, in doubt, consternation, and fear,  
 Knew not if the flag-ship had struck ;  
 When plucky Jack Crawford, a lad from the Wear,  
 Caught up the torn flag, seized some nails lying near,  
 And bounding o'er deck like a buck,

With the colors wrapped round him sprang upward on high  
 O'er the shrouds—to the shot-shattered mast ;  
 And there, while a death-storm of bullets swept by,  
 Freed the flag to the breeze, and beneath the wild sky  
 With his pistol-butt hammered it fast.

Loud cheers rent the air when Jack's comrades beheld  
 Their banner once more at the main,  
 And they felt by his deed to such effort impelled,  
 That Winter, whose onslaughts were everywhere quelled,  
 No more could the battle sustain.

Dismantled and leaky—his gear shot away,  
 And some ships set on fire by the fight,  
 The Dutchman to Duncan resigned the affray,  
 And was borne with his vessels to England next day,  
 The prize of our maritime might.

Although in his lifetime neglected, and left  
 To die like a pauper, be sure  
 Jack's exploit at Camperdown shall not be reft  
 From memory longer, for, able and deft,  
 A sculptor, in ways that endure,

Has raised him a statue, depicting the feat  
 Of his flag-nailing, pistol in hand ;  
 It stands within sight of the sea and the street,  
 Gracing Sunderland park ; a memorial meet,  
 And the only poor man's in our land.

## III.

Ah ! Nails have played parts in our story  
And hold with our lives close alliance ;  
The cradle which rocks man in childhood,  
The shoes that make easy his journeys,  
The dwelling he builds to abide in,  
The vessel he guides o'er the waters,  
The vehicle formed for his pleasure,  
The temple upreared for his worship,  
The coffin that holds his dead body,  
All owe unto Nails their construction ;  
All these, and so even the scaffold  
To which they at times have betrayed him,  
As witness a typical instance.

It is night ! o'er the desolate highway,  
A husbandman riding on horseback—  
Unmindful of death or assassin—  
Bears homeward from market the money  
Procured there for some pressing purpose.  
A robber awaits him in hiding,  
And, springing upon the lone traveller,  
First kills him, then steals all his riches ;  
Making fatherless each of his children,  
And the wife watching for him—a widow.  
Left there in his blood by the roadway,  
Alone, with the winds wailing round him  
And shuddering trees all a-whisper,  
His death-glazing eyes, staring heavenward  
To witnessing stars, plead for vengeance ;  
But who shall lay hands on the robber  
When no human tongue can accuse him ?

Awhile he enjoys his curst booty,  
Till some drunken word wakes suspicion  
And Justice grows keen with enquiry.  
Facts slowly are gathered against him ;  
And when the suspected one's shoe-prints  
Are matched with those pressed on the way side,  
Whose clay has been kept for that purpose,  
The similar nail-marks prove damning,  
And lead him in guilt to the gallows.  
So much for the trivial hobnail !  
Another strange story of murder,  
Wherein an old rusty nail figures  
And by which the crime was detected,  
Recur to my mind ; let me tell it.

A clergyman once, in his churchyard,  
Regarding the sexton whilst digging,  
Saw raised with loose bones from a grave pit  
The skull of some skeleton body.  
Reflecting on life and its ending,  
And thinking how drear is death's dwelling,  
With reverent hands, to look on it,  
He took up the skull ; but, astonished,  
Beheld there a nail much corroded  
And fixed in a fracturing puncture.  
Unseen by the grave digger near him,  
And stilling his own wakened wonder,  
He drew out the dubious iron  
And in his closed palm swiftly hid it ;  
Then calmly enquired of the sexton  
Whose bones they might be he thus rudely  
Disturbed from their burial rest-place.



With hand to his chin the old digger  
Some moments paused silently thinking,  
Then out of the depths of remembrance  
Called up a lost name and declared it ;  
Completing the clergyman's questions  
With answers that made up this story.  
"The man whose skull prompts your enquiry  
I knew as a quarrelsome fellow,  
A roystering wastrel and drunkard,  
Who lived ill and made a bad ending ;  
He died thirty years since, I reckon.  
One night, whilst embruted by liquor,  
He wreaked on his wife his ill humour  
And beat her for some fancied grievance,  
But, after a few hours, Fate ended  
His dissolute life on a sudden ;  
For he was found dead the next morning.  
His wife, who was some years the younger,  
Seemed ever a well favoured woman,  
Of good reputation and conduct ;  
Though when Dick—her sot of a husband—  
Was dead, she rejoiced beyond measure,  
And startled the neighbours, some blamed her,  
By wedding at once a young fellow  
Who lived near her in the next village."

Having learned this the clergyman sought her,  
And heard from her own lips the story  
In terms like the tale of the sexton.  
She now was a matronly woman,  
And told him with confident frankness  
' Her first spouse had died in his drinking,

Cut off by a swift apoplexy.'  
 Her visitor then showed the nail stub,  
 And said " Know you *this* ? " to her, sternly ;  
 Whereon, with confusion and trembling,  
 She sank in a swoon of dread terror :  
 Admitting at length, after question,  
 The guilt of her husband's betrayal  
 And what way she compassed his murder.  
 The records must tell—for I cannot—  
 The sequel ; and if she was punished.

IV.

But enough of romancing and story—alack !  
 Are there not nails from which *all* have suffered ?—the Tack  
 That most have at some time sat down on, and then  
 That bane of all amateur-carpenter men,—  
 I mean what they strike at but miss,—the bad Sprig  
 Which lacerates fingers and gives gents the jig.  
 The nail cyclists often pick up on the road  
 And through which their tyres and their tempers explode.  
 The Clout which, though common, was named from a prince  
 And has made many a careless plebeian to wince ;  
 Though sometimes enabling the weak, badly soled,  
 To circumvent might and walk over the bold :  
 As Gibeon did Israel at Gilgal, of old.  
 Then Sparrow-bills come ; and the Brad which pricks sore  
 Our footsoles ; and last, but not least, I deplore  
 The Spike ; which, from some corner fence sticking out,  
 Tears holes in our clothes, puts composure to rout,  
 And renders our piety open to doubt.

But it is not of these I would speak now ;  
Let us turn from the Past to the Present,  
From Nails to the Nailers who forge them,  
The maker is more than than the product.  
My manhood beholds not the brightness  
That charmed so my infantile vision ;  
Nails seem to it, now, linked with squalor  
And joyless toil's gloomy surroundings.  
To tell, here, the tale of their making  
Would be to record, to poor purpose,  
Sad stories of long disputation ;  
Of wages reduced by the factors  
Till living became mere existence,  
And strikes for redress by the workmen :  
A series of miserable quarrels,  
With losses to all through such folly,  
And bitterness worse than all losses.

What wonder at feuds and resentment,  
When, e'en in the year eighteen-hundred,  
The Law so sustained the employer  
That workmen—who had not in eight days  
Wrought up into nails and returned him  
The iron leased out for that purpose—  
Ran risk of three months with hard labour  
In jail, and a public flogging.  
Ah, Justice since then, grown less partial,  
Has balanced her scales with more fairness ;  
Right sees, now, a wider horizon,  
Though Toil suffers yet hard conditions.  
Men's lives are deplorably wasted ;—  
Extinguished by mining explosions,

In hazardous labours imperilled,  
Crushed out by the rule of the 'sweater'  
In crowded, disease-reeking workshops—  
Where irritant dust breeds consumption  
Or fumes from some chemical process  
Involve certain death by slow poison—  
All, all to make life more delightful  
And sweet for the working man's 'betters'.  
What 'waste' too, there is in the making  
Of things that are harmful and needless !

I blame neither striking nor strikers,  
If striking will help Labour's fortunes :  
Yet what may avail the hard struggle  
Of indigent spiritless Nailers  
When nails, at twelve thousand a minute,  
Are made by American engines ?  
Supplanting our wrought nails by millions.  
What would that old Worcestershire worthy,  
Dick Foley—the midland mechanic—  
Think now, could he only behold them ?

Dick Foley, who long years ago—  
Three centuries almost—  
From Stourbridge went, on business bent,  
To Sweden's stranger coast.

'Tis said that he, through poverty,  
Was forced to beg from home ;  
And sailor turn that he might earn  
A passage o'er the foam.

He sought to find by what new kind  
Of process the shrewd Swedes  
Their iron split in rods, that it  
Might suit the nail-smiths' needs.

To learn their art he played a part  
By fiddling through the land,  
Till he had seen the strange machine  
And so could understand.

The secret found, to Stockholm bound  
He trudged, with weary pain,  
And worked his way, in lieu of pay,  
On shipboard back again.

At home once more, his efforts bore  
Rich fruit to him, and blessed,  
With growing good, a neighbourhood  
Yet prosperous through his quest.

For, when he died, fair fortune's tide  
Still further helped his son,  
Whose larger hope gave wider scope  
To all the sire had done.

In kindly ways he crowned his days  
By building, on his lands,  
That school of grace and poor-boy's place  
Which near to Stourbridge stands.

All honour to his name ; may Fame  
Shed o'er it lasting sheen ;  
And many a breast, with grateful zest,  
His memory long keep green.

Such themes lure my pen to digression ;  
The Past has more charm than the Present  
Despite our surpassing inventions.  
These monstrous fruits of man's genius,  
Strong giants designed to assist him  
In tasks needing might past his powers,  
Have grown now to masterful demons,  
Enslaving too oft their creator :  
Shall they be accounted as blessings ?  
To bless men they need better guidance ;  
For hosts are oppressed by the fury  
And strife of their harsh competition.

They make poor men poorer, rich richer ;  
They brutalize too and degrade man ;  
So narrowing personal effort,  
That pride and intelligent interest  
In what he assists in producing  
Is lost, for he is but ' a hand ' now  
The live tool of some cunning engine  
Which has his own craft superseded.

## V.

Though laying no blame on the strikers  
I love more the peace-maker's mission :  
All men have a right to existence,  
A right to the fruits of their labour,  
And may they not fight to preserve them ?  
Some say strikes harm chiefly the workman.  
I ask would he win aught without them ?

I mourn them as sorry disclosures  
Of morbid commercial conditions,  
Of social disease that needs healing.  
Mankind in its parts—like our bodies—  
Can bear no neglect, or ill-treatment,  
But all are in some way affected,  
And bound to determine the grievance  
Lest general decay wreck the system.

The health and the wealth of a nation—  
And wealth should mean *welfare* not riches—  
Are summed by its component members.  
To get the most good from his efforts  
Each man's mode of labour should be that  
For which his own powers are best fitted,  
And in which he finds most enjoyment.  
Inspired by free will, not compulsion,  
Work should be to all men a pleasure ;  
Not a sad means of sadder existence,  
But a glad way to life's fairest favours ;  
A means to earn food and good housing,  
More culture and time for enjoyment,  
Till e'en the career of the meanest  
May be in all wise ways developed  
To fullness of happy well being  
And reach to a noble perfection.  
Of this end should all be desirous,  
And helped by good laws to attainment,  
For, short of it, life is imperfect ;  
And measured by such imperfection  
Becomes a deplorable failure.

Is thy fellow-man poor, he will pester thee sore ;  
 Discontented, why then he will vex thee the more ;  
 Is he by his sorrow made desperate too,  
 Beware ; lest his troubles bring harm upon you.  
 Does he sicken through want, or disease, or neglect,  
 Give help, lest he you and your children infect.  
 If vicious in conduct and evil of speech,  
 Take care lest his ways to your own habits reach,  
 And let your example a nobler mode teach.  
 For his and your own sake, in all ways you can,  
 Uplift and redeem him from misery's ban  
 And make him, by doing so, more of a Man.  
 Such help towards health, better living, and peace,  
 Shall profit the race, and your own good increase.  
 The many can never be perfectly glad  
 Whilst even a few are down-trodden and sad ;  
 And, now that whole hosts are by life-cares distressed,  
 The wealthier few must needs suffer unrest.  
 A nation but thrives through the welfare of those  
 Individual souls who its total compose.  
 Let every man seek then to sweeten life's gall,  
 Promote loving-kindness, and evil forestall ;  
 For the good of each one means the welfare of all.

We are, in our day, as a family  
 Assigned this fair world to abide on,  
 With similar interests in it,  
 'Till death ends our fleeting existence ;  
 And must be united as brothers,  
 In wise and unclashing endeavour,  
 To win the full wealth of life's blessings ;  
 Admitting no spirit of discord



Or else we shall never attain it.  
If, for all life's natural requirements,  
Men equally shared work and products,  
The task of each one would not trouble,  
And Charity would not be needed.

Though Nature bestows varied talents  
She gives to all men the same birthright ;  
The same power to show and share kindness,  
Feel friendship, know love and enjoyment—  
All good things that sweeten existence.  
The right to start fair on life's journey  
With faculties keen and uncrippled ;  
Not burthened as slaves at the outset,  
Not marked with distinction or stigma,  
Nor thrust back by caste domination.  
The race must be free, the goal open ;  
Fair Justice preventing class favours  
And giving to none power of hindrance.  
The prime need is first to develop,  
Then realise, in each man's interest  
And that of his fellows about him,  
The best of which he may be capable  
In character, skill, and sweet living.

With Justice shall Charity's efforts,  
Through man's wider weal, scarce be needed ;  
For what are her doles but a tribute  
To Misery rendered by Kindness ;  
Or peace-taxes forced by the Pauper  
From Wealth, as the price of his quiet ?  
When gifts come from generous spirits  
To fellow-souls steeped in misfortune

Because of the base greed of others,  
They mark, by their gracious bestowal,  
The grand height of man's loving nature,  
And also, alas, its debasement :  
There ought to be no reason for them.  
The wisdom of such doles is doubtful !—  
At most they but mitigate slightly  
Sore Poverty's chronic condition,  
Whose wounds, else, would grow to self-healing  
Or rouse for their cure the whole Nation ;  
Not vex most, as now, its best spirits.  
The liberal gifts of the kindly  
But tend to enrich the more selfish,  
By freeing them from obligations  
Which all ought to equally share in.

To help up our less-favoured brethren,  
And forward man's common well-being  
To all the best ends he may compass  
Must be the great aim of the future :  
For through the goodhap of our fellows  
Our own weal alone can grow stable.  
Then low forms of human contention,  
The troubles that darken life's prospect—  
Mad Anarchy's menacing storm-cloud  
With forces malign and destructive—  
Shall pass from the world's vexed horizon,  
And kindlier codes of existence,  
In love-leagues, bind men and bless nations.

## VI.

*The words of the wise are . . . as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.—Ecclesiastes.*

*As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones; so doth sin stick close between buying and selling.—Ecclesiasticus.*

Enough of digressive reflection ;  
Of Nailmaking what is the prospect ?  
I would that my pen were in wise hands,  
To write down some thoughts of discernment,  
Some note-worthy words of good counsel  
To dignify this my conclusion.  
Man's flesh is more tender than iron,  
His strength cannot cope with the engine,  
His breath may not vie with the steam valve.  
To mitigate such domination  
And win what a waning trade offers  
His ways must be governed by wisdom,  
He must join his disorganised forces,  
And use his last chances discreetly.  
Let musing, then, end in suggestion.

Keep children away from the nail-block,  
Bid young men seek better employment,  
The maiden more fit occupation,  
The wife attend more to home duties,  
And checking, thus, over-production—  
By rendering fewer the workers—  
Command for those few better wages.  
Be master and man more united,  
More tractable, too, to sweet Reason :  
Is he who, to live, sells his labour  
Less worthy than he who trades on it ?

Are not both their interests equal ?  
 Let them bury the hatchet of anger,  
 Nailed down in Contention's long coffin,  
 And smoke the conciliative peace-pipe.  
 Be it said, as was writ on the grave stone  
 Above a cantankerous couple  
 Dead as the proverbial door-nail,  
 "Their warfare at length is accomplished."

Surely Justice can frame an Agreement, designed  
 In fairness to master and workman combined ?  
 Conditions assuring such right rates of pay  
 That Labour no more shall be Capital's prey.  
 And, lest ill grow rife or dissension befool,  
 Let friendship be fostered and kindness rule ;  
 For strife is but folly defiant ; and hence  
 At war with good nature and also good sense ;  
 All conflict of interests Reason, not Rage,  
 Should calmly consider, and justly assuage.  
 If sometime by common concurrence a plan  
 Be sanctioned, let scorn and distrust mark the man,  
 Whether master or worker, who seeks to evade  
 Its purpose, and injure his fellows in trade.  
 Shun 'fogger' and 'truckster' like poison, till they  
 Grow few by avoidance, or vanish away ;  
 And let underselling, through such men, no more  
 To want and low wages lay open the door.  
 Be idlers held in derision, and each  
 Parasitical loafer, who lives like a leech  
 On the toil of a wife or a family, find—  
 As dastards deserve—the contempt of mankind.  
 More fit are his ears to be spiked to a wall  
 Than any old 'Roundhead's' on Worcester Guildhall.

Whilst living depends upon work, every man  
Must compass his needs on a resolute plan.  
The nailforge attached to the cottage may bear  
An aspect of more independence, an air  
Of cheerfuller ease than the factories wear ;  
It is nearer of access, but also—I fear—  
More easy to stray from when labour grows drear :  
Its freedom should not be abused, for no gain  
Without steadfast work will the nailer obtain.  
Saint Monday must have in his favour no place,  
Nor pothouse indulgence the week's end disgrace.  
To end his bad fortune and better his weal,  
Fixed hours must engage his assiduous zeal ;  
For he, like most other mechanics, can foil  
The woes of want only by disciplined toil.  
Let Industry guide him, and Thriftiness aid,  
And life shall present a less sorrowful shade ;  
In prosperous peace strikes and strife be forgotten,  
And his welfare rejoice one well wisher,

JOHN COTTON.

May, 1892.



## NOTES.

**EVERY** Industry — including even the apparently common-place trade of Nailmaking—has its romantic side ; but to have intruded into the verse more matter in this direction would probably have been to weary the reader outright, even supposing him not already tired.

The subject of Nails and Nailmaking, however, having a special connection with Bromsgrove, has tempted the author to include with some notes relating to the text other facts and matters which he has gathered ; and these notes the reader will peruse or ignore as care for or lack of interest in the subject inclines him.

PAGE 68. T.—In the revised version Sisera is not decapitated. Jael seems to have anticipated the mode adopted in later times for putting to death certain Christian saints, for St. Piat suffered martyrdom at Tournay or Seclin about A.D. 990 by being transfixed by large nails, and St. Quentin is said to have died through having nails driven into his head, A.D. 287.

There are various references to nails in the bible, and to ' pins,' which may mean large nails, or, in some cases perhaps, wooden stakes. *Vide Ex.*, chaps. 27, 35, 38 ; Judges iv. 21, Is. xxii. 23-25, Zec. x. 4, Eccles. xii. 11, Jer. x. 4, 1 Chron. xxii. 3, 2 Chron. iii. 9, Ezra ix. 8.

The nail, especially among nomadic peoples, was an emblem of fixity.

PAGE 68. M.—Large copper nails with cast heads, representing human figures, have been found in some of the cities of the East, below the corners of buildings and under pavements. They were driven into the ground in circles, and are supposed to have been used as a menace to subterranean demons, the causers of earthquakes, &c. This driving of nails into the ground under foundations may have been a humaner form of an old custom, which seems at one time to have prevailed, of founding cities, and possibly temples, in human blood. (See Joshua vi. 26, 1 Kings xvi. 34). The sacrifice was probably made either to gratify the particular god of the tribe or else to appease the demons believed to inhabit the under-world, and likely therefore to be annoyed by building operations. According to Grimm's *Mythology* and other works of the kind, children or adults were often buried alive in or under the foundation walls of old Danish and German structures of importance, even in christian times. It is stated that two brothers were so buried beneath the base stones of Strasburg Cathedral. Pious Japanese, until quite recently, not infrequently volunteered to be buried beneath the foundations of their temples. The Chinese, to-day, believe that spirits of the earth resent the erection of ugly buildings and the laying of railways.

PAGE 70. T.—The Roman soldiers were given money to provide themselves with shoe nails, and the emperor Caligula obtained this name when a boy in consequence of his father having, to please the soldiers, put upon his son in their presence the military shoe (*caliga*). Nails were put to many superstitious uses in classic times, and Pliny is said to have recommended, as a cure for epilepsy, the driving of a nail into the exact spot where the sufferer's head fell on his first attack with this complaint. The Romans derived the custom of driving the *clavus annalis* into the temple of Jupiter from the Etrurians, who drove nails into the temple of their goddess of Fortune (Nortia) to keep a reckoning of the years. After a while the Romans adopted other means of keeping time, but the annual nail, by legal enactment, was still driven into the temple wall by the chief magistrate, to preserve the city from pestilence. In the Art of classic times the goddess Necessitas (Fate) was represented with a nail in one hand and a hammer in the other, in the act of fixing, as it were, her unalterable decrees.

PAGE 70. B.—The 'Nuremberg Maiden,' 'Scavenger's Daughter,' and 'Iron Virgin' were names given to an instrument of torture and death used in the religious and political persecutions of Europe during the middle ages. It was somewhat like a tapering barrel in shape, with a woman's head carved on the top. The figure had a door in front, and when the victim was led blindfold to 'embrace the maiden' an apparatus forced him inside, the door closed upon him, and he was pierced by long sharp nails and knife-blades with which the interior was surrounded.

PAGE 71. T.—St. Helena is stated to have discovered the 'true cross' about three hundred years after the crucifixion, and when she was about seventy nine years of age. A good instance of the preservation of buried timber and the keenness of an old lady's eyesight; to say nothing of the gullibility of christian believers of the period. This same Helena is said to have also brought to Europe Pilate's staircase, and the Well-head beside which Jesus met the woman of Samaria (both these are now shown at the Church of St. John Lateran at Rome). She also found the 'Holy Coat' (now at Trèves) and the inscription board from the top of the cross. As to the nails of Jesus' crucifixion, they were said to have been found beneath the cross 'shining like gold.' There was great controversy in olden times as to whether there were three nails or four, but to satisfy the relic-worshippers of the Middle ages these 'holy nails' multiplied so that a list has been made of no less than *thirty-two* of them, all more or less different.

The Bridle, or rather *Bit*, referred to is said to be still in the church of Carpentras, France, where it was taken as a relic in the time of the Crusades. For other interesting particulars on these subjects and that of the 'iron crown,' see *The Legendary History of the Cross*, by John Ashton and Baring-Gould.

PAGE 73. T.—With reference to this Dane's-skin tradition, the late Mr. Noake, writing in 1866, says in his *Monastery and Cathedral of Worcester* that some old doors, still preserved in the crypt, and probably those removed from the North porch in 1812, have on them a skin which under scientific examination has been pronounced to be human, and of which he (Mr. Noake) has a specimen. Human skins have also been found on church doors at Rochester, Westminster, and elsewhere. Men were sometimes flayed alive under the old forest laws.

PAGE 73. M.—As to Nailmaking at Alcester, which was an old station of the Romans on the Rycknield Street, there is a tradition of the early times referred to, to the effect that St. Eguin and other missionaries from Evesham (early in the eighth century) having heard an unfavourable account of the moral condition of Alcesterians, visited them for the purpose of reformation, but the perverse smiths of the place made such a deafening clatter with their anvils and hammers that the saint and his monks had to retire unheard, and disconcerted by their reception: not, however, until they had severely cursed, in the ecclesiastical language of the time, these impiously unharmonious blacksmiths. The tale suggests that there were workers in iron and probably makers of nails at that place then. As to Bromsgrove it is, of course, possible that there were smiths and nailmakers (for the two trades would be combined) here also; though when nailmaking as now practised first became a speciality of the district I do not know. There are references in the parish registers to nailers in 1657 and later on. (See W. A. Cotton's book, *Bromsgrove Church*.) Leland, who made a survey in Henry VIII. time, states that 'the towne standeth somethinge by clothinge,' but does not refer to nailmaking. Nash, writing upwards of a century ago, says that 320 persons were employed in the linen and linsey, and 960 in the nailmaking trade. These figures, however, may have referred not only to the town, but may have included workers in the surrounding district. I should imagine that the nail trade was first started here, in a general way, upwards of two hundred years ago, probably at the time of Foley's success at Stourbridge. I have seen it stated that there were only five or six nailmasters in the locality at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Even in 1765 the nail trade of the country at large was spoken of as in a declining condition. According to the 1851 census 3119 persons then worked at the local nail blocks; but in the census returns for 1901, just published, the figures have sunk to 964 (the number of male and female workers being about equal.) It is singular how closely these figures correspond with those given by Nash (the historian of Worcestershire), upwards of a century ago.

PAGE 73. B.—Teitzel was an ecclesiastic commissioned by Pope Leo X. to grant and sell Indulgences (pardons for sin) in Germany; this device being adopted to raise funds towards the building of St. Peter's at Rome. Teitzel seems to have gone about the business in a very noisy and blatant manner, drumming through the country more like a mountebank than a monk. Luther said 'God willing I will beat a hole in his drum,' and drew up and nailed to the church door at Wittenberg ninety-five theses or arguments against the system of granting Indulgences, the general

purport being to deny the Pope's power to so forgive sins. John Ziaka, the leader of the Hussite reformers in Bohemia, &c., is said to have bequeathed his skin to be tanned and made into a drum-head, that it might serve to animate his successors.

PAGES 74 & 75.—The naval battle of Camperdown was fought Oct. 11th, 1797. The Dutch had the most vessels, but the British superiority in guns and men. Duncan is said to have addressed the officers who came to him for instructions before his fight with De Winter began, in these words:—"Gentlemen, a severe Winter is approaching; I have only to advise you to keep up a good fire."

Though not relating to Crawford's exploit, it may be noted that in the German army at the present day the nailing of the Regimental Colours to the staves carrying them is done with great ceremony in the Hall of Fame at Berlin. The Kaiser, Kaiserin, with nobles and officers down to the color-sergeant, each driving a nail to secure the flag to its shaft.

PAGE 79. B.—Clout nails were so called from the prince and saint Chlodowald (St. Clud), one of the nephews of Chlotaire, king of northern France, who murdered all Chlodowald's brothers, he only escaping by becoming a hermit in Provence, where he is said to have wrought many miracles. Returning to Paris subsequently he founded a monastery at Nogent-sur-Seine, now called "St. Clond." He died September 7th, 560, which day is his in the calendar of French saints. He is the tutelary of Nailmakers.—Vide *Flemish Relics*, by F. G. Stephens.

PAGE 80. T.—In the evidence given before the Parliamentary Labour Commission, March, 1892, it was stated that the average earnings of men in the Spike-nail trade were only 12s. to 14s., and of women 4s. to 5s. per week, factory hours being from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Of the small nails, produced chiefly at Bromsgrove, it was stated that good male hands could earn about 12s. per week, but that many able-bodied men could not get more than 9s., and that of this about 2s. was deducted for tools, &c. Another witness, however, from Dudley, stated that men in the nail and chain trades there could earn 18s. 5d. per week, women about 10s., and youths 11s. 9d.

PAGE 80. M.—Public flogging was inflicted in cases of embezzlement only (where the offender converted the iron into money for his own uses).—See pamphlet of rules and laws of the trade issued by *The Nail Ironmongers* January 14th, 1800, printed by W. Maurice, Dudley.

PAGE 81. T.—I have taken no note of recent statistics, but according to the *Labor Gazette* of 1896 nearly 5000 workpeople were killed or injured by trade accidents in this country, including 65 deaths from lead poisoning.

PAGE 81. M.—In 1889 a Mr. Capewell, an American, produced a machine capable of making 12,000 nails a minute, and requiring only one boy to attend to it.

PAGE 82.—Richard Foley died 1657, aged 77, and was buried in the chancel of Old Swinford church. His son Thomas was described by his friend Baxter, the Kidderminster divine, as 'a truly honest man—who from almost nothing did get about £5000 per year or more by ironworks and that with so just and blameless dealing that whoever he had to deal with, that ever I heard of, magnified his great integrity and honesty, which was questioned by none.' This Thomas Foley owned and lived on the Witley Court Estate (afterwards sold to the Earl of Dudley for £900,000). Thomas founded the Old Swinford Hospital in 1667 for 60 poor boys to be fed, clothed, and educated, and endowed it with land bringing in £600 a year; the property now brings in, I believe, between £5000 and £6000 per annum, and supports 160 children. Thomas died and was buried at Witley; his grandson was made a peer in 1711.

PAGE 83. T.—As to how labour is crushed by the excessive use of machinery, official statistics of the United States, published a few years ago, indicate that the number of men employed at New York as carpenters has decreased 15 per cent, shirt makers 33 per cent, bakers 20 per cent, furniture makers 35 per cent, printers 41 per cent, type foundries 50 per cent, ribbon weavers 40 per cent, wood carvers 62 per cent.

PAGE 89. T.—The phrase 'dead as a door nail' refers to the nail upon which, on old doors, the knocker struck, and which, being knocked on the head so much, was deemed to be peculiarly inanimate.

PAGE 90. M.—'St. Monday.'—Many mechanics will not work on Mondays, hence, from its being an idle day—like an old saint's day or holiday—it is sometimes referred to as St. Monday.



## Prologue.

On the occasion of Dramatic Performances to promote the establishment of a Hospital at Bromsgrove, when the burlesque of "Ivanhoe," and the comedies "A Blighted Being," "A Fish out of Water," and "Mad as a Hatter" were performed in the old Corn Exchange.

OH Charity, thou most benignant maid !  
To thee we cry—solicitous for aid ;  
Incline thine ear and, answering our appeal,  
Some signs of gracious interest reveal.  
Descend at this auspicious hour, and pour  
Thy generous nature through the inmost core  
Of every bosom, and with shame involve  
Each selfish tendency and mean resolve,  
Like vivifying wine so stir the heart,  
And such a tone of sympathy impart,  
That, warmly glowing with fraternal zeal  
And filled with ardour for the common weal,  
All present may their kind assistance lend  
To comfort the afflicted, and befriend—  
By means of our new-founded Hospital—  
Those stricken ones Misfortune holds in thrall.  
For them, for it, our present prayers accrue,  
Who unto thee importunately sue ;  
For them, for it, for thee, for love, to-day  
The actor's part we now propose to play ;  
And while an over-flowing ' house ' we court,  
We seek most its material support ;  
Wherefore, O Charity, our object bless  
By giving us full seats and rich success.

I pause from my apostrophe, perplexed ;  
As might a preacher who has lost his text.  
That slow-discerning prompter my dull brain  
Suggests, now, that the invocation's vain,  
Or needless, rather,—and the throng seen here  
Confirms the fact and makes it plainly clear.  
The Spirit I conjured within, without  
Has been already busily about  
Persuading you, for so it seems to me,  
To first bestow the charitable fee  
And then support us with your company ;  
Wherefore I thank and welcome you, and so  
Would ask you now attention to bestow  
What time our champions of the drama hold  
'The mirror up to nature,' and unfold  
With wordy circumstance, upon this stage,  
The entertaining measure of their rage.

In this fair hall to fruitful Ceres reared,  
And chiefly by bucolic swains revered ;  
Yet now subservient to the Sacred Nine,  
And rendered thus especially divine.  
This hall whose walls, immaculately white,  
Compel our wonder and confound our sight ;  
The triumph of the neighbourhood and boast  
Of all the lecturing clan and conjuring host.  
What though some individuals declare  
That want of oxygen affects its air,  
And with the pangs asphyxia inspires  
Would ventilate both it and their desires,  
Imperviously cemented, proof to blame,  
It stands as unapproachable as Fame :—

Particularly now each closing door  
Prevents admission to the crowded floor,  
Compelling late invaders to retreat  
And 'institute' a passage to the street.

For you our orchestra will now display  
Their instrumental skill to make you gay,  
For you, when this is done, our actors strive  
With all their wit to keep your mirth alive.  
Beneath this roof—on this proscenium here,  
The Genius of Burlesque shall first appear,  
And by the mystic glamour of her spells  
Direct those suitors whom her charm compels ;  
Who wait impatient to disclose a plot  
Developed from the page of Walter Scott.  
Lend them your ears and, if need be, your hands,  
When they, subservient to her commands,  
Come forth, as presently they shall, to show  
The chivalrous romance of IVANHOE,  
And by a praiseworthy performance prove  
Their knightly skill in feats of war and love.  
Should they resort with counterfeited rage  
To desperate engagements on the stage,  
Be pacified, ye fair ! let no alarms  
Dismay you with anticipated harms ;  
Our heroes are a prudent sort of men  
Who fight but so that they might fight again ;  
Or making love, preserve a cautious awe  
Of breach of promise suits and courts of law.

The scene is changed ! we bid the curtain rise  
Once more, while genial Comedy employs

Her further arts to gratify anew  
Your interest, by summoning to view  
'A BLIGHTED BEING' whose distressful plight  
Shall consummate your merriment to-night ;  
And this perplexing paradox disclose,  
That Charity finds joy in others' woes.

Although ' FISH OUT OF WATER ' may with reason  
Be laid before you at this present season,  
Yet, lest you disregard our bill of fare,  
By all the piscatorial gods I swear,  
That, so our hope to please you be not foiled,  
We care not if our fish be fried or boiled :  
Should they provoke your palate then, condemn  
The blundering cook, but neither me nor them.

Our utmost aim, the summit of our wishes,  
Has been to serve up such attractive dishes  
That you, enticed thereby toward our cause,  
May grant it your encouraging applause.  
Nor yet applause alone, for we would say—  
Before you rise at last to go away—  
If you have any loose gold, cheques, or notes,  
Or silver—from crown pieces down to groats—  
You wish to put to money's worthiest use,  
Leave it with us, we won't your trust abuse.  
Whatever offerings you may so confide,  
To soothe the suffering poor shall be applied :  
On whose behalf and for whose happier ends  
We would enrol you all as helpful friends ;  
And while distress exists and life endures  
Be recognised their servitors and yours.

*Commotion within.*

The prompter agitates his threatening fist  
As though he would compel me to desist :  
Impatiently he beckons me away  
And bids me quit the stage without delay.  
Too long I have monopolized, I know,  
Your kind attention—but, before I go,  
I would entreat your further condescension  
An instant, while this incident I mention :  
A circumstance has recently estranged  
One of our number, who has gone deranged ;  
He is in fact quite mad,—“ MAD AS A HATTER,”  
Which seems too serious for a laughing matter.  
Should he, by some delusive whim imbued,  
Before you all imprudently intrude,  
Be patient with him, pray, and let your smiles  
Prove antidotal to his wayward wiles.  
As we our moral force discreetly try,  
Do you benignly ‘ fix him with your eye ’ ;  
The exercise of such engaging powers  
Shall reinstate his peace of mind and ours ;  
Emancipate him from dame Folly’s fetters,  
And leave both Charity and us your debtors.

April, 1877.



## Prologue

To a Dramatic Entertainment in aid of the Bromsgrove Cottage Hospital, when "The Chimney Corner" and "A Phenomenon in a Smock Frock" were represented.

**M**OST gentle friends ! to foil this wintry weather  
"THE CHIMNEY CORNER" gathers us together ;  
And no rude elements shall mar our meeting,  
Or chill the warm expression of my greeting.

To cheer you further will be shown anon,  
Upon these boards, a rare "PHENOMENON  
IN A SMOCK FROCK," a most ingenuous youth,  
The frank embodiment and soul of Truth ;  
Truth unadulterate and, strange to say,  
Discovered lately in the milky way.  
Permitted at our door his can to gauge  
He vents his candour freely on the stage,  
Until alas, like Adam, being human  
He falls a prey unto the wiles of woman.

It may surprise you somewhat when I state  
We wish to make you partners in our fête ;  
That two sets of performers may appear,  
Ourselves, and you who sit before us here ;  
You our distinguished guests,—pray do not start,  
For you shall play the most important part,  
And demonstrate besides this curious fact—  
A house can be an audience and can act.

'Tis ours, as votaries of the Comic Muse,  
The spirit of enjoyment to diffuse ;  
'Tis yours, affected by her genial grace,

To make those happier whose painful case  
Prevents their presence ; who at this same hour  
Desponding, languish 'neath affliction's power,  
Or, maimed by accidental injury, sigh  
For that relief your kindness may supply.

I must confess I wish you one and all  
Could be attacked by what the doctors call  
Enlargement of the heart—so that it be  
A generous enlargement—then let me  
Attend you, and I would its action charm—  
Recounting cases of such grievous harm  
Committed to our Hospital and cured—  
'That sympathetic tone would be assured.  
I then should bleed—I mean each purse trepan,  
And ease you and your suffering fellow man ;  
The operation would your spirits mend,  
Help 'circulation,' and benignly tend  
To make of each one a *subscribing* friend.

Enough ! I plead but for the poor, the frail,  
The sick and sorrowing—Let my plea prevail !  
Our acting may amuse, but that is all ;  
*Your* good gifts may the demon Death recall  
From many a bedside in our Hospital.

December, 1879.

## **Lines on the Deaths of a Father and Brother.**

The author excuses himself for including these semi-personal pieces on the ground that the subjects of them, in their lifetime, played a somewhat public part in Bromsgrove affairs, and left many local friends.

### **WILLIAM COTTON.**

Began life as a Builder, afterwards became an Auctioneer, Valuer, and Surveyor, achieving much celebrity in the Midland district. He died March 5th, 1874, aged 51 years.

*"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well!"*

---

**P**EACE to his manes ! everlasting peace !  
Here lies the body which his sentient soul  
So lately graced and so abruptly left ;  
Called with scant warning by despotic Death  
From life's quick scene, and all he counted dear.  
The potent voice is hushed, the ready tongue—  
That oft with humorous jest and keen retort  
Awoke the laughter of the motley throng  
Attendant on his presence—dumbly dwells  
Within the prison of his sealed-up lips  
That ne'er shall open more :—alas, he lies  
Death-stricken on the bier ! and now, full soon—  
To-day—a few, a mournful few, of those  
Who knew him best and loved him most through life,  
Shall bear his body to that fresh-dug grave  
Which coldly waits its tenant—dust to dust !



Some men there are whom, o'er life's chequered stage,  
Fortune or instinct guides by peaceful paths  
To tranquil dissolution ; but his lot  
Was cast in all his days 'mid busy scenes ;  
Distracting trouble and grave cares were his ;  
His own and others' deep anxieties  
He knew, and knowing resolutely bore,  
Till death released him from the 'whelming load.  
Counsel was his to give, and it was given  
As freely as 'twas sought—without reward  
Save that of thanks by grateful minds expressed—  
And many a heart and home, in adverse times,  
His friendly aid and trusty services  
Have strengthened and defended, helped and cheered.  
His faults the pall shall hide ; let him in whom  
Perfection dwells remove that sacred screen.  
A shroud may serve the body's ghastliness,  
But where is he who would not cloak as well  
Some sorry feature of a lapsing life  
Which else, revealed, might bring his memory blame ?  
We all shall need a veil for our defects  
When life's last tale is told ; and it may be  
That on the morrow, reader, Death may call  
And beckon with stern finger thee or me.  
Peace to his spirit—peace !



WILLIAM ALFRED COTTON.

Was an Auctioneer and Estate Agent. Interested himself in local antiquities and compiled a History of Bromsgrove Church, and other antiquarian works and pamphlets. Died June 20th, 1889, aged 37.

*"The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,  
The best-conditioned and unwearied spirit  
In doing courtesies."*

WE grieve, as one by one our kindred die ;  
We weep, but Death looks coldly on our tears ;  
Our tenderest tones are lost on listless ears,  
Our fondest words elicit no reply :—

And now our brother, who from boy to man  
Loved us as we loved him, unconscious lies,  
Garbed for the grave, with sealed up lips and eyes ;  
Made careless of our care by fate's fell ban.

Death summoned him, and he—thus early called—  
With placid spirit met the doom severe ;  
Happy in that—his upright conduct here,  
Happier in this—that him no fears appalled.

We weep ! our tears are natural,—born of love,  
And love is natural for it comes of trust,  
Trust, too, is natural in the good and just,  
And doth not RIGHTNESS reign all things above ?

Our comfort then is this, that, though we mourn  
For loved ones lost, the troublous days shall end ;  
And though withheld awhile from our dead friend,  
We yet may meet again in some blest bourn.

IN MEMORIAM.

John Harris Scroton.

Mr. Scroton was a printer and bookseller in the Market Place, Bromsgrove, for many years. He published the first Bromsgrove paper—*The Gleaner*, and wrote several small volumes of verse. He was the first to practise photography in the town. He also painted in water-colors, devoting himself often to humorous scenes. (Died August 22nd, 1880.)

*"Smit by the common stroke of doom  
The corpse lies on the trestles."*

AH ! lay him on the bier since he is dead ;  
And when from thence ye bear him to the grave,  
Whose wormy walls shall prison up his corpse,  
Dispose him gently in his final home  
With due respect, as fits his worthiness.  
For he was one of Nature's noblemen,  
And one who was her lover too, withal ;  
Who worshipped at her shrine until his heart  
Beat warm with greater likings for his kind.

An honourable citizen, he lived  
The steadfast friend of all who knew his worth ;  
And died as he had lived, a foe to none :  
For self-aggrandizement disfigured not  
The tale of his career ; serener joys  
Than aught that wealth can purchase or bestow  
Made happy the mild measure of his days.  
Nor yet was his the apathetic life  
Of some dull drone ;—the strife of politics  
Beheld him as a warrior in the breach,  
Intent on victory for the faith he held ;  
A faith built up of generous sympathies,  
A faith in man inspired by trust in God.

Through life he loved to commune with the Past,  
And those heroic beings gone before ;—  
'The dead but sceptred sovereigns who still rule  
Our spirits from their urns. His heart ran o'er  
With silent worship of the great of old ' :  
For there is such respect twixt life and death  
That the repute of lofty deeds survives  
To kindle ardour in all noble souls.  
Tis thus the grand achievements of gone times  
Become a present lesson, and the fame  
Of heroes an inspiement, or reproach.  
Affected thus, he held in high esteem  
Those actors in the Commonwealth who burst  
The fetters forged by a misguided King  
To curb and hamper England's liberties.  
He loved to talk of Cromwell, and the train  
Of patriots banded with him, and their deeds  
Grown glorious with our freedom, and his love  
Induced the Muse to vivify his pen  
With laudatory pæans in their praise.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now—since ye have borne him to the tomb,  
And heaped the cold soil on his hoary head  
Frosted through many winters—let his worth  
Be present to your memory ; though no more  
Ye win his hand-shake in the market place,  
Or in the byeways of the town receive  
A cheery greeting from his friendly voice,  
Alas ! grown silent ; for his tongue is hushed,  
And all poetic rapture from the brain  
With his last breath remorseless Death has drained ;  
Snatching both pen and pencil from his hand :  
So that his genius may no more record  
The sweetness of the harmonies he heard,  
The splendour of the beauties which he saw ;—  
Poet and artist, both, in him are dead.

**Verses on the Occasion of a Dinner**  
to  
**Dr. Roger Prosser, of Bromsgrove,**

In complimentary celebration of his Fiftieth Birthday.

**N**IGH thirty years ago there came  
To Bromsgrove one, now dear to fame,  
A doctor, with the pleasant name  
of Prosser.

Well-versed in all the healing arts,  
To turn aside Death's dreadful darts,  
To lengthen lives and gladden hearts  
came Prosser.

Not only came, but settled down ;  
And ' treated ' all from gent to clown,  
And brought no end of babes to town  
did Prosser.

He fixed his brass-plate on the wall,  
And soon won the regard of all ;—  
Both young and old and short and tall  
liked Prosser.

Beneath his diagnosing gaze  
Disease unmasked its evil ways,  
And soon assumed a milder phase  
for Prosser.

The pains that on sad sufferers prey  
Were soothed or spirited away  
By potions, doled out night and day  
by Prosser.

As Stanley, on discovery bent,  
Through Afric's dark interior went,  
So down our throats his pills were sent  
by Prosser.

They found the sources of the bile  
And set to work to reconcile  
Ill humours of the chyme and chyle  
for Prosser.

They skirmished round the stomach, got  
In touch with each congested spot,  
And pierced obstructions like a shot  
for Prosser.

His blisters, too, without a doubt,  
Drew all the harm in people out ;  
He soon put patients' pangs to rout  
did Prosser.

And when he 'operated,' none  
Knew how the dreaded deed was done ;  
He 'gassed' his victims so with fun  
did Prosser.

For all the ailments men endure,  
Imagined, real, or obscure,  
He proved himself a 'perfect cure'  
did Prosser.

His bills were even than his pills  
More mild ; he felt for people's ills,  
And knew that too much 'bleeding' kills,  
did Prosser.

Misfortune, in whatever guise,  
 Aroused his active sympathies ;  
 And drew both help and counsel wise  
 from Prosser.

When cruel fate seemed most unkind  
 His friendly care made men resigned ;  
 Hope soon came back to cheer the mind  
 through Prosser.

When politics were in the air  
 The doctor showed himself ' all there ' ;  
 He made the High Street people stare,  
 did Prosser.

And now, if guns go off, they say  
 " The Primrose knight has joined the fray ; "  
 Or " scarlet fever's bad to-day  
 with Prosser." \*

And yet I think he will allow  
 That Radicals have kept their vow ;  
 He's had his '*acher's* and his cow '  
 has Prosser

About his farming and his sales,  
 I dare not tell the merry tales  
 Folk father on *our* Prince of Wales,  
 Rog. Prosser.

In matters that affect the town  
 He has achieved a high renown,  
 And ought to have a civic crown,  
 ought Prosser.

The useful worth of his career  
 Makes every neighbour hold him dear ;  
 There is no better dweller here  
 than Prosser.

\* *Scarlet* was the political color of the local Conservatives.

His reputation stands secure,  
It lives in good deeds that endure ;—  
About his kindness ask the poor,  
re Prosser.

His generous heart, his genial ways,  
His many frank and friendly traits,  
Have won deserved respect and praise  
for Prosser.

And so, in honour of his worth,  
And wishing him all joy on earth,  
His townsmen celebrate the birth  
of Prosser.

May he live long, a happy life,  
Exempt from care and free from strife ;—  
Here's to him, and his worthy wife !  
GOOD HEALTH TO PROSSER !

*January, 1886.*

Dr. Prosser's health failed, and he died soon after the above occasion (on January 30th, 1887), aged 51 years, and much regretted. In this year (1902) Mrs. Prosser also has passed away.

The subject of the above verses might well have as an epitaph the lines inscribed on an old Scotch physician in Glasgow Cathedral. They run as follows :—

Stay, passenger, and view this stone,  
For under it lyes such a one  
Who cured many while he lieved ;  
So gracious he noe man grieved.  
Yea, when his physick's force oft failed,  
His pleasant purpose then prevailed :  
For of his God he got the grace  
To live in mirth and die in peace.  
Hevin has his soul, his corps this stone,  
Sigh passenger, and soe be gone.



**A Tribute to Walter Fawke,  
of Bromsgrove,**

Read at a complimentary dinner to Mr. Fawke at the Dog and Pheasant Inn, Bromsgrove, November 29th, 1899, on the occasion of his leaving the town. Mr. Fawke was formerly a Drill Sergeant in the 'Scots Greys'; a Crimean Soldier, and has been for many years a Professor of Physical Training.

'A RMS and the man, I sing,' for Fame  
Has bravely linked with war's rough game  
A veteran of our town, whose name  
is Fawke.

Long years ago, when Raglan sought  
To bring the Russian power to nought,  
With him in Crimean regions fought  
friend Fawke.

On Alma's heights his sword flashed bare,  
At Inkerman he bore his share,  
At Balaklava he was there,  
was Fawke.

With Scarlett—not with Cardigan—  
Our hero the red gauntlet ran ;  
And valiantly he played the man,  
did Fawke.

If you would hear the stirring tale,  
Of how, amid the guns' hot hail,  
Our cavalry charged down the vale,  
ask Fawke.

He came back wounded ; came to fill  
In home-life's less dramatic bill  
A post more honourable still,  
did Fawke.

For he has done good work since then,  
Through the past twenty years and ten,  
Building boys into better men,  
has Fawke.

He has, with credit and renown,  
Both trained them up and drilled them down  
In this and many a neighbouring town,  
has Fawke.

Has taught them marches of 'the Maze' ;  
By sports athletic sought to raise  
Their strength, and disciplined their ways,  
has Fawke.

Himself bred on the Olympian plan,  
An all-round athlete and a man  
By Nature fitted for the van  
is Fawke.

At football he can force the field,  
At wrestling make opponents yield,  
At cricket well the willow wield,  
can Fawke.

At boxing he can 'dot your eyes,'  
At rifle shooting 'knock off flies,'  
And 'touch the spot' whene'er he tries,  
can Fawke.

On fête, and fair, and gala days,  
With his good sword, in various ways,  
He fills the people with amaze,  
does Fawke.

For he can cleave a bar or button ;  
And when he starts to cut up mutton  
He staggers every gaping glutton,  
does Fawke.

If Buller fails to beat the Boers,  
Send out our Yeomen 'thistle mowers,'  
Our Fire Brigade and Rifle Corps  
with Fawke !

When pounced on by him like a hawk,  
The burghers soon will backward walk ;  
For he can strike as well as talk,  
can Fawke.

The Fire Brigade with squirt and hose  
From far Natal will force our foes,  
Or drown whoever may oppose  
bold Fawke.

As soon as they turn on the tap  
They'll swill the Transvaal from the map,  
Or float it nearer Britain's lap,  
for Fawke.

---

Enough of jest ! The powers of man  
Are limited as is life's span,  
And long ago the strain began  
for Fawke.

His years and deeds claim rest well won,  
And now, for all that he has done,  
We hail as Bromsgrove's worthy son  
friend Fawke.

Upright alike in form and ways,  
Tis well, in these decadent days,  
That there should be a meed of praise  
for Fawke.

And, whether it be to repose  
Or work elsewhere our warrior goes,  
May he find friends and no more foes.  
' Long life to Fawke !





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CONDENSED OPINIONS ON

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*The SATURDAY REVIEW (London) says—*

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The choice is various—there are ballads and legends, and sonnets in praise of Shakespeare. There are lays, also, that recall those of Ancient Rome by the spirited style of their opening. (*Quotations.*) The poet is his own illustrator, and many of the etchings are really pretty. January 9, 1892.

*The BIRMINGHAM DAILY POST says—*

Few poets are artists, and able to illustrate their poems by pictures as in this handsome volume—etchings remarkable for very delicate and powerful effects. They make up a very welcome volume as an art gift-book. The poems are varied in subject and in style. They have been written in the small leisure time of an architect's career. Some of them are the outcome of an intense love of nature and rural life; others are historic and human in interest; all are graceful in form and metre—perhaps the best are those in blank verse. Some prose notes of historic interest give the volume variety. December 24, 1891.

*The BIRMINGHAM DAILY GAZETTE says—*

Mr. Cotton is one of the small but clever band of poets who have obtained recognition within a limited area, but who are now seeking to extend their literary conquests. Poets, in these days, have a hard battle to fight, but the author is doubly armed for the fray, for not only can he write good verse, but he can deftly use the artist's pencil. There are pieces which reach a very high level, and cannot fail to commend themselves to lovers of lyrical lines and suggestive thoughts. November 6, 1891.

*THE ARCHITECT (London) says—*

It is unusual for an architect to express his thoughts in rhyme, and in all the preceding volumes of this journal there is no account of an experiment of the kind. It is said by Wordsworth that poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity, and the latter may be said to pervade the greater part of Mr. Cotton's book. There is no affectation of exceptional power, no attempt to gain sympathy by an exaggeration of the ordinary sorrows of human kind, and no assumption of airs on account of superior virtues. What the author says of the ideal poet expresses no doubt his own aspirations—

*"It is his happy mission to convey,  
His privilege and glory to impart,  
Such animating solace to the heart  
As shall its dire forebodings wile away."*

The value of the poems is increased by the author's etchings. It is almost as rare to meet with verses and illustrations from the same hand as poetry from an architect. Mr. Cotton has earned the support of his brother architects for proving that construction and fancy can be combined. December 4, 1891.

*The MIDLAND COUNTIES HERALD says—*

This graceful addition to our local poetry will be welcomed by the many friends of the author, and by a wide circle of the "gentle readers, frank, susceptible, kind," who will sympathise with the writer's kindly muse. Mr. Cotton is a "man of the mid-countrie," and to our mind his pen is never more happily employed than when revelling in the rich and beautiful details of a Nature which pretends not to the awful or sublime, but which,

in its own quiet way, has few rivals and no superior. Not that the subjects of the poems are exclusively Midland, or, indeed, English, for, in fact they range far afield, and are prompted by a widely eclectic choice. But through all runs a broad, charitable, happy spirit which stamps them with a pleasant individuality. Pessimism has little or no place, sympathy and love a very large one. The original etchings prove that it is not by the pen alone that Mr. Cotton finds artistic expression easy, and the needle and the quill combine to form a very dainty and acceptable volume of poetry none the less true in spirit because unambitious in expression. January 28, 1892.

*The WORCESTER JOURNAL says—*

We are able to give hearty praise to these verses, which have come of a receptive nature and a reflective mind, that warmly appreciates Nature's bounty and beauty, admires the best of man's handiwork, and has keen sympathy with notable character and achievement. Only those who make acquaintance with the verses will appreciate the wide choice of subject, the grace, and the spirit which distinguish them, and which we are specially pleased to notice because they are the work of a Worcestershire man. November 7, 1891.

*The WORCESTER HERALD says—*

This dainty little volume is a welcome addition to Worcestershire literature. Mr. Cotton's verse is full of sentiment never far-fetched or maudlin. Occasionally one comes across a scintillation of wit, which shows that the author is not devoid of humour. He is a close observer of nature, and his country poems are true to life. November 14, 1891.

*The BIRMINGHAM DAILY MAIL says—*

The effusions are scarcely those of the prentice hand, and warrant the supposition that but for the exigencies of business Mr. Cotton would have, ere now, been regarded as something more than a local poet. The verses are chiefly lyrical, and in point of rhythm are well-nigh faultless. The volume is illustrated by etchings executed by the author: these, indeed, are beyond praise. November 6, 1891.

*The BUILDING NEWS (London) says—*

A poet of no mean order seeks fame in the person of Mr. John Cotton (Fellow of the Institute of British Architects), of Birmingham, whose *Song and Sentiment, Lyrical and other Verses*, are published by Simpkin and Co. The author combines the qualifications of bard and artist. No thoughtful professional brother should fail to buy a copy of the book; he will find much in it to charm him whatever his mind. November 13, 1891.

*The SOUTH BIRMINGHAM NEWS says—*

The appearance of a volume of poems by Mr. John Cotton, of this city, will be welcomed by many people besides personal friends. The verses bear the hall-mark of true poetry. The poems are illustrated by thirteen exquisite etchings—in themselves picture poems. Taken as a whole, this will probably rank among the best and more important collections of poems published in Birmingham during the present century. November 21, 1891.

*The BROMSGROVE MESSENGER says—*

There is that great variety of subject and of style which is in itself no mean criterion of ability. Mr. Cotton has the well-tutored ear for the assonance of sweet sounds requisite to produce good lyrical poetry, and in what may be termed his poems of action he possesses that picturesqueness and vigour of treatment which are essential qualities. As a poet singing the praises of Nature, he has acquired keenness of observation, much aided by an eye for the beautiful. In addition to being a poet, the author is an artist of no mean order. We heartily commend the work to our readers. November 21, 1891.



CONDENSED OPINIONS ON

**"Thoughts and Fancies."**

*The BIRMINGHAM DAILY POST says—*

These verses indicate a mind attuned to gentle, refined, benevolent thought, earnestness and sincerity, sensitive to beauty. The writer's chief thought is ever of humanity, its sorrows, its joys, its hopes, its fears, its strange mysteries. He aims here to be not so much the expounder of the soul in Nature as the preacher of tender, pitiful, tolerant, kindly thought; of justice, of liberty, of hope, of love, &c.

*The OXFORD CHRONICLE says—*

The book contains many pieces of really excellent poetry. The verses are uniformly characterised by a nobleness of feeling and sympathetic charm which will commend them to every lover of delightful poetry. The rhythm is admirably maintained.

*The LITERARY WORLD says—*

We did not have to look far before finding evidences of the author's earnest and tireless love of beauty.

*The HAMPSHIRE TELEGRAPH says—*

A many-sided man is Mr. John Cotton, of Oxford, formerly of Birmingham. By profession he is an architect, by natural bent a poet, and by virtue of artistic talent he is the worthy illustrator of his own verses. This rare combination of poetic and artistic skill makes his books peculiarly interesting. A collection of lyrical and other verses from his pen, illustrated by delightful etchings which also owned him as their creator, was published in 1891 under the title of *Song and Sentiment*, and met with a very flattering reception from the critics and public alike. As a poet the author is talented in regard to ideas and the means of expressing them. He is thoughtful and earnest, a reformer, and a lover of righteousness as well as beauty. There is a good deal of variety in the seventy-eight pieces of which the volume, *Thoughts and Fancies*, is made up.

*The BIRMINGHAM DAILY GAZETTE says—*

This is a very choice little volume, daintily printed and bound, and embellished with some pleasing original illustrations by the author, who does not need any introduction to Birmingham readers. He has a graceful and reflective style, and a genuine poetic vein. In this volume he gives us plenty of variety, and in "A Seaside Walk" and "The Marriage of Moses" there are fine lines.

*The BIRMINGHAM DART says—*

Mr. John Cotton's latest poems are gems of melody in rhyme and reason.

*The WEST CUMBERLAND TIMES says—*

The poems have been written in the leisure hours of an architect's life, and as the title device and six beautiful illustrations are from the artistic hand of the poet we seem to have Longfellow's verse personally illustrated:

*All are architects of Fate,  
Working in these walls of Time;  
Some with massive deeds and great,  
Some with ornaments of rhyme.*

Mr. Cotton's poems deal with Nature in her various moods, with Philosophy, and the better side of Religion, and his verses throughout show thought, skill, and deep poetic feeling. We have had pleasure in perusing these poems, and we trust that their refining influence may be widely spread by a large and continuous circulation.

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*Romantic Tales*  
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*BERROWS' WORCESTER JOURNAL* says—

The author is well known as an accomplished poet. In this volume he makes an incursion into the domain of dogma and morals. It is the glory of the highest forms of poetry to appeal to the universal consciousness; but, as Mr. Cotton himself anticipates, with *some* parts of his leading poem few will be found to sympathise. His searching diagnosis of social maladies and his scathing invectives may find a response, but his methods will rouse antagonism. The author, however, has the true instinct of the poet; and in "*The Carol of the Bells*" there are beautiful lines reflecting the great verities symbolised in the old church tower and God's Acre of which our poet sweetly sings. We seem at the beginning of "*A Story from a Steeple*" and in the "*Carol*" to see Mr. Cotton. In his gentle and more trustful moods, and, for our part, we would rather meet him thus than as censor and critic. "*Nails Old and New*" is an altogether worthy and successful poem—a notable contribution to our somewhat scanty store of strictly local poetry. Certainly the nailmakers of Bromsgrove have never before had their lowly trade lifted to such a high plane of romantic idealism. The description of Bromsgrove, with its nailshops and forge fires, is most vivid and melodious. Some illustrations after drawings by the author are lovely in conception and treatment.—March 21, 1903.

*The BIRMINGHAM DAILY POST* says—

Mr. Cotton is as happy in poetical inspiration as he is clever with his pencil, and the two gifts combined have produced a handsome little volume. The place of honour is given to a "*Story from a Steeple*." Quaint and interesting is the local survey, ranging over five centuries: equally good the effigy's Tale of Christmas Eve. "*Nails Old and New*" is a suggestive and thoughtful poem. Copious and scholarly notes form appendices to both poems. Excellent illustrations are from drawings by the author.—March 6, 1903.

*The MIDLAND COUNTIES HERALD says—*

The author has more than a mere local reputation: he is intimately familiar with the history of his picturesque district, and finds in it his surest inspiration. The tale of changing times and men and manners (in a Story from a Steeple) is gracefully and genially told. The Carol of the Bells is fresh, spontaneous, and touches a true note of joy. In every way a pleasing addition to the poetry of Worcestershire; the more so by reason of the few but choice illustrations, the work of the author himself.—March 12, 1903.

*The WORCESTERSHIRE ADVERTISER says—*

"A Story from a Steeple" is a long and ambitious poem, but forcible and devotional, in which matters moral and theological are ably treated. Explanatory references are made which are exceedingly interesting.—March 14th, 1903.

*The BIRMINGHAM DAILY MAIL says—*

The author handles local legends in a pleasing manner, and his work achieves more success than many more ambitious productions.—March 18th, 1903.

*The BRIERLEY HILL ADVERTISER says—*

The Carol of the Bells is marked from first to last by spirited versification and by a successful effort to give expression rather to the spirit than the mere letter of religion. Mr. Cotton succeeds in steering clear of the merely conventional. There is real freshness of feeling. The occasional pieces bear the hall-mark of poetic aptitude with a happy power of versification. The volume ought to be popular in Bromsgrove and have a large circulation.—April 4th, 1903.

*The COUNTY EXPRESS says—*

We have quoted sufficient to show the trend of the book, and those interested in folk-lore will find themselves amply repaid for a fuller perusal of its entertaining pages.—March 14th, 1903.

*The BROMSGROVE MESSENGER says—*

(After describing the features of the principal piece.) We do not know whether Mr. Cotton had any idea of the kind in his mind when he wrote this composition, but it seems to us, from the musical and varied character of the verses and the romantic aspect of the piece, that—with parts omitted to reduce its length and condense it—this Story and Carol would make an admirable basis for a Cantata for a Christmas festival. This is of course supposing that a musician was forthcoming who, entering into the spirit of the work, was equal to the task of setting it to worthy music. Parts could be declaimed or recited, parts adapted to solos and choral productions by male and female voices; bells could also be introduced. The piece seems also well adapted for impressive scenic effects. "Nails, Old and New" is a most interesting poem or series of poems, containing much food for the thoughtful.—February 28th, 1903.

1875



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